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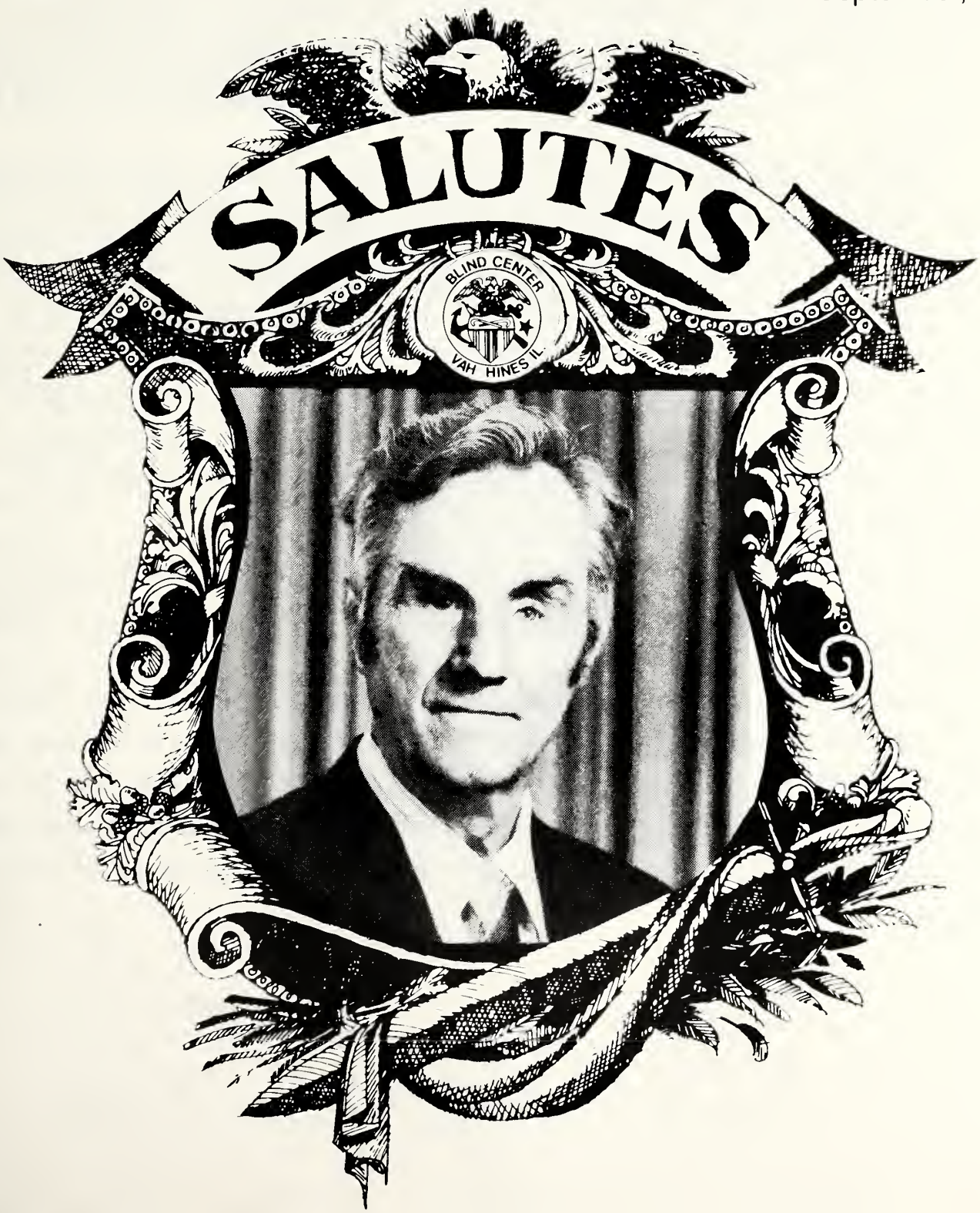
C.B.R.C. TORCH

"Let it light the pathways of the blind, that their dignity may be restored."

September, 1988



PREFACE

Russell C. Williams, at the youthful age of 30, ventured into the new frontiers of the blindness field with emphasis on Orientation & Mobility. The wisdom of C. Warren Bledsoe in selecting such a brilliant young man for the position of chief of the Blind Center was an act of Providence. Williams, who was a proponent of the lightweight Long Cane travel, proved to be a dynamic leader who excercised superlative discretion and forthrightness in his judgment and with fortitude forged ahead when other leaders in the field of blindness said that what he was doing was unnecessary.

Since the lightweight Long Cane travel did not engender support from outside the V.A. program, Williams kept the staff at Hines purposely unified in order to guard and nurture his philosophy, ideas, beliefs and theories against the world. He created an attitude of camaraderie, propagating a self-support system among the staff — Stan Suterko, Alford "Dee" Corbett, Edward "Bud" Thuis, Edward P. Mees, Lawrence E. Blaha, and John Malamazian — while in the process of experimenting and refining the technique. They acquired enough experience in a very short time, making an impact with its innovations in O&M to prove to the world that the Hines Blind Center's philosophy was sound and feasible.

The blind programs, world over, soon came to accept and adopt into their programs this revolutionary and innovative Long Cane travel concept which Williams courageously forged and solidified.

Although articles on Russell C. Williams have been published twice before, once in the 1983 holiday issue of the Illinois BVA VOICE and again in the first issue of the CBRC TORCH, the TORCH feels it necessary to repeat, but this time as a salute. Hence, with the approval of Chief James J. Whitehead, this publication has been made available to the guests of the 40th Anniversary of the Hines Blind Center celebration.

Stephen Miyagawa

FOREWORD

Russell C. Williams, through his life's work and contributions to the field of Blind Rehabilitation, has become a legend within the Veterans Administration, the United States, and internationally. There is little I can do, or needs to be done, to embellish his role in history as a pioneer and leader in the field.

What needs to be told about Russell Williams is his many outstanding attributes as a human being. Most people who have been fortunate enough to meet Russ have been touched by his great personal warmth and concern for others. Countless blinded veterans' lives have been enriched by Russ's company, counsel and personal philosophy. His speeches and writing speak in a bygone style of eloquence, but with great clarity and purpose.

Dr. Kelso Carroll, Director of Hines V.A. Hospital at the time of the creation of the Blind Rehabilitation Center, many years later, wrote a letter to Warren Bledsoe reminiscing of the early days. Dr. Carroll, I believe, made the best statement to date. He wrote, "I shall always remember what we started at Hines. Of course, there never will be another 'Blind Center' such as we had, and there will never be another Russ Williams. For my money, Russ is one of the really true Americans, accomplished and dedicated always to his work, family and country."

J. J. Whitehead
Chief
Central Blind Rehabilitation Center

PIONEER NUMBER ONE: RUSSELL C. WILLIAMS

by STEPHEN MIYAGAWA

In the mid-1940s, the first V.A. Blind Rehabilitation program for war blinded was only a concept in process of being conceived. After having overcome the prejudice against a V.A. program for the war blinded, and resolving the politicking, C. Warren Bledsoe, then recently discharged from the military, was assigned responsibility for staffing the Blind Center. He very well knew that realization of his hopes and dreams for this program depended upon the talent and caliber of people he selected, as well as the support of such as General Paul Hawley, Dr. James Greear, Dr. Derrick Vail, and all who took careful measure in helping to make it a success. While at Valley Forge, Bledsoe worked with a war blinded soldier who had been his star pupil, and who he felt could carry the program to success. From that day on, C. Warren Bledsoe entrusted the keys of blind rehabilitation's eternal torch to the person of Russell C. Williams.

Russell C. Williams, born February 19, 1918 in Auburn, Indiana, to Mark and Grace Williams, obtained his elementary and high school education there. During more than half of his 12 school years, he delivered newspapers. Russ was basically a competitor for good grades and liked athletics and excelled in them.

For a year and-a-half after high school, Russ worked in factories in Auburn, Indiana, and Tecumseh, Michigan. He then took advantage of an invitation to enroll at Central Normal College in Danville, Indiana, where he was offered a financial break for participation in sports. Athletics were his chief interests and there he practiced his leadership and team effort he learned as a child from his father.

Russ played three years as a quarterback on the football team and two years as center in basketball — others were much taller, but he had long arms, big hands, and knew how to out-jump the opponents. As a sophomore, he proved the highest point-getter in track but claimed that it was "small college stuff and no world records came out of it". When the baseball coach was in trouble for pitchers, Russ started and won a game, and pitched a lot in others. Although he engaged in sports for the fun of it, they were important, because one of his major studies was Physical Education.

Russ graduated from college in 1941 with a Bachelor's degree in Education, and licensed to teach in high schools of Indiana. He taught at a high school in Dillsboro, Indiana, and became the Athletic Coach there. He was well-liked and

respected, as reflected in his several contacts with the students during subsequent years. Thirty-five years later, he was invited to deliver the commencement address to the last graduating class of Dillsboro High School before it became consolidated.

On June 12, 1942, Russ was inducted into the Army with the Light Artillery Battalion of the 83rd Infantry Division and in ten months made Technical Sergeant in charge of the operation platoon of the Headquarters Battery.

In April of '44, he went to England, then to France via the Normandy Landing (a week or so after) D-Day in June through Omaha Beach. He survived fighting in Normandy and Brittany. However, about seven miles south of the ancient pirate port of St. Malo, France, Russ was wounded in the left shoulder and just below his left temple by shrapnel from German artillery fire — totally blinding him immediately.

On October 1944, Russ was at Valley Forge Army Hospital in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, where medicine and surgery were administered before war blinded were sent to Avon "Old Farms", the formal place for rehabilitation training. About May, 1945, he went to Avon for his rehabilitation training, where they advocated "facial vision" (learning to perceive obstacles by the sensations derived on one's face upon approaching them). They did not advocate using the cane. Upon completing training, he returned to Valley Forge to fill a position as counselor and Braille instructor.

About this time, Warren Bledsoe — who had a part in teaching Orientation & Mobility to soldiers hospitalized for extensive surgery prior to formal rehabilitation training to be given at Avon — began to see and talk with Russ as often as he could get to Valley Forge, frequently speaking of plans for a V.A. blind center. (By this time, Bledsoe was discharged from the military but was actively involved working for General Paul Hawley and Donald Covalt in Washington, D.C.)

Bledsoe finally told Russ that he had been thinking of Russ as the Blind Center's chief. Russ was pleased but shaken, since he had met so many prominent leaders of programs for the blinded, and heard of so many more. He hesitated, for he felt he was being dragged into water way over his head. At a meeting in New York with Kathern Gruber, Bledsoe and a few others, leadership for the proposed center came up. Harry Spar of the Industrial Home for the Blind in Brooklyn, New York, at this meeting, said Russ should have the position as the Blind Center's chief. With Gruber, Bledsoe, Spar, Father "Tom" Carroll, and Dick Hoover telling Russ he should do it, how could he "duck out"? The wisdom of those pioneers has been a blessing to modern blind rehabilitation!!! For Russ was the ideal first one

to hold high the eternal torch enkindled by Bledsoe; Russ was the one who plowed the first furrow — and never looked back once he set his hands to the plow. He became the first molder of the Hines Blind Center's philosophy, the innovative venture of modern blind rehabilitation.

Thus, upon Russ Williams' shoulders fell the monumental task of creating the Hines Blind Center philosophy. A task which Chief J. Whitehead aptly likened unto the Biblical quotation, "I shall build my church upon this rock". For the foundation of blind rehabilitation, Russ was entrusted with the great job and duty — not just because he was blind — but because he had the character of inherent leadership with great initiative and inspiration. Bledsoe's trust in him was proven valid and reliable. Russ felt that the Chief of such a center, *"Firstly, must be the buffer, protector, translater, and interpreter between the staff and the man on the street, opinions of the management of the hospital, and the whole V.A., as well as society in general who often hold opinions about what ought to be done with blind people which are contrary to what the Center knows is right. Secondly, the Chief, in his role as leader, is the one responsible for imposing the regimen and milieu of the Center. He is the one who is responsible for the hard stuff that the staff has blinded fellows do; he is the one who ultimately the veterans must argue with if they doubt what is going on. He cannot delegate this responsibility."*

Russ was the indispensable man to head the program at Hines. On October 7, 1947, Williams' appointment was requested by the branch office of Hines Center.

When the word "Center" was applied to a program for the blinded in the V.A. Department of Medicine and Surgery, it did not mean a place or a building but a person, and that person was Russell C. Williams. Had he not been the person Bledsoe thought he was, there would have been no Federal program for blinded veterans after 1949. Bledsoe credits Russ for binding it all together, linking the gains of Valley Forge Army Hospital to the future through the program at Hines.

Russ was officially appointed on February 20, 1948, and the first to arrive at Hines, followed by Bledsoe and Kay Gruber several days later. The rehabilitation for blinded veterans was given one building on the Vaughn Hospital side where the first Blind Center was established. "There we sat in a room with one telephone and one folding chair, acting like we knew what we were doing," in the humorous words of Russ Williams.

The success Russ achieved was in part derived from support given him by the hospital manager, Dr. Kelso Carroll and especially Dr. Louis B. Newman,

Chief of Physical Service, and a staunch supporter of the blind program. There was good rapport between Russ and Dr. Newman. Through them Russ enjoyed the freedom to create an uncompromising, ethical standard which rubbed off on his staff members. He was the architect in establishing a "rehabilitation center" not an institution for the indigent or as an asylum for the blind. He had a kind of trust in the patients, dealt with them on a one-to-one basis, allowing them the freedom and independence to experiment and develop their capabilities under qualified supervision, whether working with power tools in the shop or walking independently in the villages and cities nearby.

Russell C. Williams gave the torch of blind rehabilitation its impetus for glowing ever brighter, never wavering, never flickering.

Five HBC pioneers were recipients of 20th Anniversary certificates presented by Director of Hines Hospital, Lee Schlessinger, M.D. Left to right: Edward P. Mees, Edward "Bud" Thuis, John Malamazian, Russell C. Williams, A.*Stafford Chiles, and Alford "Dee" Corbett.*

After 11 years at Hines, Russ advanced to become the second director of Blind Rehabilitation Services at Central Office in Washington, D.C., replacing Bledsoe who vacated that position.

As indicated by Don Wedewer, Russ had the intelligence and foresight to have molded such an innovative Blind Rehabilitation program for blinded veterans in the V.A. system — Hines, the first of its kind.

After the World War II blinded veterans were mostly taken care of and the activity at Hines was winding down, all of a sudden the Korean Conflict began; thank God Hines was there.

The teaching of Mobility was a strong thing at Hines as Russ was influenced by the teaching of Richard E. Hoover and Warren Bledsoe at Valley Forge. The influence of Hines made an impact on Blind Rehabilitation movement to improve blind services originated from Hines through the development of Western Michigan University, and subsequently other colleges and universities instituted Mobility programs in their curriculum.

Russ became the leader of Rehabilitation centers, not just nationally but internationally, as Hines Blind Center became the "cultural area", so to speak. BLIND REHABILITATION DIFFUSION began at Hines as early as 1951 when the impact of its teaching was infectiously spreading into the civilian programs as well as throughout the world, like the concentric circles created by a stone thrown into the water. The program at Hines was the Cadillac in the blindness industry, and Russ was the first Chief and Director of that industry.

Even while in the most fruitful years, the program at Hines was in jeopardy because the military hospitals had their own ideas as to what to do with the blinded soldiers returning from Korea. At this point, Russ and Bledsoe recruited the help of Dr. Derrick Vail, Chief Consultant in Ophthalmology, whose influence turned this problem in Russ's favor.

Russ, Bledsoe and Gruber worked very hard at maintaining the program at Hines, ensuring that it stayed, persisted and had its identity and didn't get swallowed up in the medical scene at the hospital. Donald Blasch can attest to this since he too had undergone a similar experience when he became Chief when Russ left Hines for a broader policy-making position in Washington, D.C. in 1959. Consequently, it was through Russ's influence the blind program became a separate entity in the V.A. hospitals.

Russ not only had the vision, but manifested the skill in weaving a quality

blind rehabilitation tapestry for the entire United States. As of result of his influence, we now have a total of four federally-operated Blind Rehabilitation centers: Hines Blind Center — 1948; Western Blind Rehabilitation Center — 1966; Eastern Blind Rehabilitation Center — 1969; and the last which was in the planning stage while he was still the Director: Southeastern Blind Rehabilitation Center — 1982. There were also several clinics for severly blinded veterans: Waco — Texas; Tacoma — Washington; and New Hampton — Massachusetts.

Russ did not stop there. He also had influence in the development of a new concept — the Visually Impaired Services program in which the American Foundation for the Blind and Blinded Veterans Association were involved. The VIST Coordinators at the V.A. Medical Centers call in the blinded veterans for evaluation of all his needs, medical and otherwise, and help him in his adjustment to all phases of life and work. To date, there are 86 Vissually Impaired Services programs; 59 of them have full-time coordinators leading them.

Yet, Russ found time to lecture at San Francisco State University, Denver University, Temple University, Boston College, University of Minnesota, Peabody, and several more places.

He has also published articles in professional journals for the visually impaired, as well as medical publications.

In his retirement, Russ still remains active serving on the National Advisory Committee of the Blinded Veterans Association, and as a member of the Board of Director for the Maryland School for the Blind. In the words of those in the V.A. system, the V.A. still seeks Russ's counsel and advice. He continues to play an important role as advisor to the Veterans Administration.

Bledsoe and Gruber keeping careful watch over Williams' first child.

John S. Crowley of A.F.B. presenting the Migel Award to Russ C. Williams.

Russell C. Williams is a giant among other giants in the field of blind rehabilitation, some of whom he helped to become so. Russ became the conscience of the blinded.

In May of 1945, while at Valley Forge, Russ was wed to Jean M. Riley and to them were born five sons: Clark, Mark, Riley, and Pete — born during Russ's tenure at Hines; Paul, the youngest, now deceased, was born in Bethesda, Maryland.

AWARDS AND HONORS

Russ received:

1. BVA Achievement Award (now the Melvin Maas Award) — 1953
2. AMVETS National Rehabilitation Award — 1956
3. Honorary Doctor of Humanities, Western Michigan University — 1963
4. President's Award, Greater Pittsburgh Guild for the Blind — 1966
5. Outstanding Handicapped Federal Employee of the Year — 1973
6. Lawrence E. Blaha Memorial Award — 1975
7. V.A. Exceptional Service Award — 1975
8. HBCA Honorary Life Time Membership Certificate — 1982
9. M.C. Migel Award — 1986.

Although Russ has been gone from the scene of his creation for some time, his philosophy persists as revealed in the inscription depicting John D. Malamazian on the plaque which is now erected, monument-like foundation, in front of the Hines Center — an obligatory code for those in Blind Rehabilitation to follow, to which Russ was the author. It reads thus:

> *The dedication of the Hines Blind Rehabilitation Center to the memory of John D. Malamazian honors his work as a staff member and Chief of this program from September 1, 1949 to January 1, 1983. This dedication commits those who follow to carry on his ideals of truth, honesty, charity and compassion. He developed programs for all blinded veterans no matter in what condition of mind and body they came. His wholesome influence and exemplary teaching helped them to pick up their lives with their heads high and direction clear.*

(continued on next page) ►

He epitomized, at its finest, the hospitality of Greater Chicago to blinded veterans who came from all parts of the United States and its possessions. It is likely that he would be pleased to share this dedication with that community which gave him to us. His every act of professional life honored the Blind Center at Hines. May their every act henceforth in behalf of blinded veterans honor him.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

1. Chief James J. Whitehead for approving this salute to Russell C. Williams.
2. Dr. Lee Farmer for providing the photo of the pioneers receiving certificates from the director of Hines Hospital.
3. The American Foundation for the Blind for providing, in 1986, the photo of Williams receiving the Migel Award.
4. C. Warren Bledsoe for providing the photo of two most caring godparents humoring Williams' first child.
5. Blind Service Association for providing volunteer reading.
6. Marge Dorigan for reading and splicing sections from one article to another.
7. M.B. for advice and critiques.
8. TORCH is forever grateful to Pauline Rose for the superb job of the finished product of the TORCH.
9. M.B. for sponsoring this salute to Russell C. Williams.
10. Justo Alamar, an American Legion friend, for offering his service as a courier.
11. My late brother, Sueo, for the art work on the cover.
12. Hines's Art Department for the 40th Anniversary seal on the front cover and the mailer sides of the publication.
13. Thanks to all those who had a part in the production of this TORCH whose names are not mentioned or were inadvertently left out.

Mahalo to all for your much needed kokua.

C.B.R.C. TORCH

Building 13 (124)
V.A. Hines Hospital
Hines, Illinois 60141-9999

FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND
& PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED
POSTAL MANUAL PART 135

Central Blind Rehabilitation Center

40th Anniversary
1948-1988

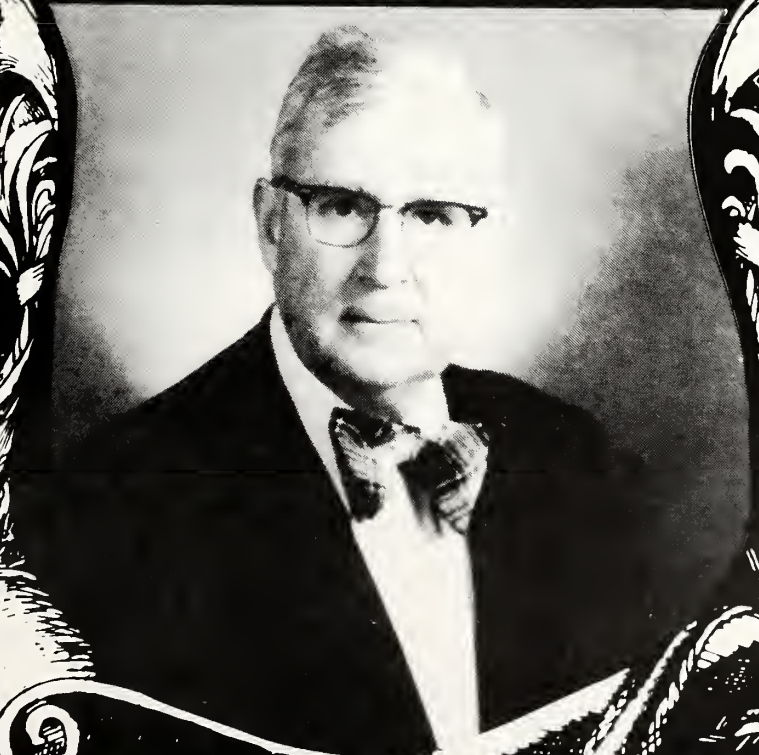
C.B.R.C. TORCH

"Let it light the pathways of the blind, that their dignity may be restored."

July 1990

SALUTES

BLIND CENTER
VAH HINES IL



Richard E. Hoover

Champion Potato Peeler of the World
Peels One Potato At A Time

— Richard E. Hoover —

RICHARD E. HOOVER
FATHER OF THE LIGHTWEIGHT LONG CANE TECHNIQUE

by STEPHEN MIYAGAWA
with Bledsoe & Williams' immense assistance

PREFACE

What would your reaction be should you become instantly or even gradually blind?

Reaction will vary from one person to another since there are individual differences in personality and the manner in which one utilizes his or her intelligence to overcome his or her misfortune. For some, the experience of total darkness is utterly overwhelming. While others, wittingly or unwittingly, learn to compensate by utilizing their senses of hearing, smell and touch. Nevertheless, they are faced with total sightlessness, a complete blackout of the objective, external world. As the misfortune of blindness befell them and the external world vanished, so did their orientation to the external world. As a result there were no landmarks; thus they could not determine their whereabouts. This momentarily gives one the feeling that he is in a vast and boundless desert or, like the mariner, on a limitless sea, devoid of all objects and landmarks, with no stars to direct his way.

Yet those of us who are fortunate to have the remaining senses still intact find them to be essential tools when we can no longer rely on sight. These senses literally become our scouts to gather needful data and information to carry on where our sight left off.

It is at this juncture that the blind person places his implicit trust in the Orientation and Mobility (O&M) specialist, who plays a integral part in sharpening the senses to compensate for the loss of sight. He teaches us to maximize the use of our senses so they become our antenna to detect and locate landmarks in our environment which we can no longer perceive with our own eyes. He also teaches us to enhance our directional abilities.

It was Richard E. Hoover who discovered that the cane, held in a position centered to the body as it is wielded from side to side with the tip touching the ground in front of the trailing foot, gave the blind person maximum protection. His design of the cane and its usage to the blind person's mobility can be likened to Alexander Graham Bell's invention of the telephone, both being essential instruments we cannot live without. While his discovery may have still been in an infancy stage

at Valley Forge Army Hospital in the mid-40s, nevertheless, the monumental discovery of the concept of the cane being utilized in a systematic manner, plus its unusual length and light weight, were the discovery that figuratively "split the atom" in a blind person's mobility.

Hoover's innovative discovery, integrated with teaching orientation to the environment, have lit the pathways of the blind. In essence, therefore, he brought the blind out of darkness as he liberated them through independent mobility.

As a result, blind persons could be seen walking in the neighborhood and city, going to and from work, shopping, or going about their mundane routine. Hoover's contributions, therefore, made an indelible mark in orientation and mobility. Prior to World War II, there was no formalized O&M training.

Russell C. Williams, First Chief of Hines VA Blind Center, observed, "The lightweight long cane did not acquire the stigma of a helpless blind person. It became a useful implement with which to travel. The cane as a result acquired a measure of respectability."

Stephen Miyagawa
Editor

FOREWORD

by C. WARREN BLEDSOE

Dick Hoover and I became friends riding horseback with the students at The Maryland School for the Blind in the 1930s. He loved sports and made a sport of almost everything he did, which was one of the reasons for his success teaching blinded soldiers when war came.

Dick would have been at home on a ball team with Jimmy Stewart, Will Rogers and Spencer Tracey. Like theirs his uncommon ability did not prevent him from having a comfortable next door neighbor quality. The kind of nextdoor neighbor you would swear by and look to in solving common problems. He was inventive. One of his ophthalmological colleagues said he could have taken a baseball bat and shown you how to play tennis with it. When the Greater Baltimore Hospital was built, his ward was unlike any other speciality's. Patients' rooms were lined up immediately adjacent to the nurses' treatment center for quick access in emergencies, clearly of more benefit in case of hemorrhage than outside views of the Maryland countryside.

Hoover had what the Bible terms "eyes that see". He constantly spotted what others failed to notice. His visual memory registered for rerun almost the way a movie

camera does. It was this which enabled him to catch in his brain the movement of a blind man's tapping cane. Thus he determined that in order to touch where the foot would go down at each step, it must touch in front of the trailing foot. This partakes of the nature of a dance step which is learned, rather than instinctive behavior. Observation of 337 self-taught veterans blinded for many years revealed only three who had developed any approximation of this. But for Hoover's detecting it, the cane he designed to make it practical and his adroitness in luring people to try it, I believe orientation and mobility of the blind would still be where it was before 1940.

Hoover was fond of quoting some wag who said *he* didn't know anything about art, but *he* knew what *he* was like. *Hoover* himself did indeed know what *he* was like and exactly where he wanted to go after the war, which was to medical school with a view to being an opthalmologist, because as he said, "The best thing you can do for the blind is make them see."

When the time came to do this he was not at all possessive with respect to the contribution he had made to orientation and mobility. It never occurred to him to try to patent the cane. He didn't even think it should be called the Hoover cane, though he knew it was in the realm of folk ways and folks would call it what they pleased. He aided and abetted and took the greatest pleasure in the future which the Hines program gave to his method. He knew better than anyone else as events unfolded that his work would have gone for nothing if it had not been taken in hand, assimilated and improved upon by the genius of Russ Williams as a leader and teacher with the capacity for national leadership. Russ was a rare fisher of men and the original staff he chose, were a rare school of thought and action.

No one has perceived the meaning of their work with greater sensitivity than Steve Miyagawa.

In great scenes of human experience individuals find themselves called on to play roles which are sometimes a surprise even to themselves. The War Blinded of World War II were the occasion of a commotion in the world in which Dick Hoover and I found ourselves called upon to take part. To Hoover at various times came the roles of teacher, planner, organizer and (that which he always thought most important) "people picker". In me he saw a listener with a desire to understand and bear witness to the truth in a written record.

This is a role which does not appeal to many and which in fact is not a popular one. As St. John said, those "under the fifth seal" are like to perish for the "witness that they bear". Seekers of the truth often seem laughable when they agonize over the

trials of their authorship but the agony is in fact real. To me personally, it is very invigorating and companionable that Steve Miyagawa has put himself on the line in the service of the Hines Center story which I have many times struggled to tell without ever feeling I have done all I should. Those who admitted Steve to the center as a patient, little knew what a sense of history and honor they were taking into the bosom of orientation and mobility. The saint in heaven who looks after Steve must be the one patient in ten who returned to thank the Great Physician for His healing.

FOREWORD

by STANLEY SUTERKO

The one appropriately labeled the "Father of Orientation and Mobility" is Richard Edwin Hoover, and he has been given this title as he is credited with the development of the mobility method used today with the Long Cane. Dick Hoover (as he was known then) had his initiation into the field of visual impairment and blindness in 1937, as a teacher and physical training instructor at the Maryland School for the Blind. With the coming of World War II, he had gone into the Army and was assigned to the Army Engineers. With an influx of blinded soldiers, the Army needed personnel with experience in working with the blind, and Richard Hoover was recruited to work at Valley Forge Hospital, where he was once again associated with Warren Bledsoe from the Maryland School for the Blind. These two spent many hours in discussions on how to improve the mobility of the newly blinded soldiers arriving at Valley Forge. Thus, it has been recognized that Sgt. Hoover (at that time) developed the systematic scanning method to be employed with a Long Cane. This Long Cane technique (many times called the Hoover Technique) would enable the blind to travel with greater safety and proficiency in all types of environments.

As one of the charter members of the Mobility Department at the Veterans Administration Hospital, Hines, Illinois, I undertook Blindfolded Mobility training with the Long Cane, and the mobility techniques developed by Dr. Hoover. Under the tutelage of Russell Williams, Warren Bledsoe, and Dick Hoover, a cadre of five pioneers were indoctrinated into the travel techniques developed at Valley Forge and initially taught at Hines.

With time and experience, this cadre of mobility pioneers held brainstorming sessions periodically, to further develop and refine the mobility techniques to provide more effective and efficient travel in various environments.

After the war, Richard Hoover entered medical school and became a

distinguished Opthalmologist. With an extremely busy and demanding medical practice, he found time to serve on many boards, provided consultations to a multitude of governmental, public, and private agencies serving the blind and visually impaired. In spite of a demanding Opthalmology practice, he devoted time and expertise for the support and further development of this burgeoning mobility field. On one of my professional visits to Australia to spread the gospel on Mobility, quite a number of people in blind rehabilitation told me of Dr. Hoover's coming to Australia in 1962 to introduce the Long Cane.

While visiting Dr. Hoover at his eye clinic, it was evident he was not only concerned with the medical management of the eye condition, but also the effect it has on the total patient. He would take time after the office visit to explain and demonstrate to family members the simplest of guiding techniques which would make it easier for the client. This total concern for his clients pretty much sums up Dr. Hoover's basic nature in dealing with people.

INTRODUCTION

by STEPHEN MIYAGAWA

Since the dawn of creation, history has been in the making because of men and women of extraordinary qualities. James Newcomer, past president of the A.E.R., O&M Division IX, himself a relatively newcomer in the field of O&M, remarked, "It is fascinating to me to notice how significant talented people seem to find one another, to discover each other, and encourage each other, and challenge each other through their mutually shared ideas and adventures. In the process, each becomes so much more than he or she would have been alone." Evidence of this is the inventiveness, unselfish sharing and dedication of the men and women who forge the frontiers of man's thinking pertaining to blindness.

These frontiersmen did not place pecuniary value on their own efforts in creating programs for the blind. This attitude carried over through the 40s, 50s, and even into the 60s. The pioneers created, shaped, and refined the blind rehabilitation programs with sweat, blood, and dedication. As a result of their efforts, a new profession was born; specifically, the Orientation and Mobility Specialist.

About two hundred plus years ago, most blind persons were beggars and outcasts, often subjected to inhumanity. Systematic efforts to educate them were nonexistent throughout the world, although early attempts were made in helping the blind, usually in the form of asylums connected with monasteries. A few turned out to be useful citizens, but a large number of the sightless depended upon charity.

In 1771, Valentin Hauy, a Frenchman, was deeply touched by the cruelty inflicted upon the blind and became inspired to improve their condition. In 1784, he founded the first school for the blind, creating an impetus for the training of those who lost their sight as adults. The impact of his efforts, consequently, led to the compulsory eduction of blind children. In the United States, the education of blind children is provided for in special schools. The Perkins Institute and Massachusetts School for the Blind in Boston are the oldest and most famous of these. It was the cradle of blind rehabilitation which reflected Hauy's influence. Samuel Gridley Howe was the pioneering director of the Perkins Institute for almost half a century. He was responsible for educating Laura Bridgman, who was deaf and blind, which led to remarkable success in the education of blind deaf mutes, most notably Helen Keller.

At or about the time Helen Keller was at the Perkins Institute, a young man was attending Harvard University studying blindness literature under the tutelage of Michael Anagnos at the Perkins Institute. This dynamic, daring young man was John Francis Bledsoe, who became the superintendent of the Maryland School for the Blind. He introduced the cottage family program at his school, graciously crediting Samuel Howe for that concept, which was not followed through at Perkins at that time.

Valentin Hauy, who cast the first stone, creating a concentric circle of waves upon the water, sent a deep, loud, clear and distinct message, inadvertently creating clusters of cultural areas for the education of the blind; an area rich with innovative, revolutionary resources, not only of ideas, traits, and philosophies, but of men and women who give birth to them.

The progeny of the prodigious and innovative John Francis Bledsoe, C. Warren Bledsoe became the visionary extension of his father. With the passage of time, Richard Edwin Hoover became a member of the team which was to make significant

contributions to modern and revolutionary Orientation & Mobility. Like the force of magnets, talented people seem to attract one another and to mutually share their ideas and adventures. Thus, the story of Hoover unfolds.

YOUNG HOOVER AT M.S.B.

Richard Edwin Hoover, was born to Charles B. and Dotte E. Hoover on January 19, 1915, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and lived in central Pennsylvania from age seven until he attended college. He attended Pennsylvania State where he obtained his B.S. degree in 1936. In 1937, he applied for a position at the Maryland School for the Blind. C. Warren Bledsoe, graduating from Princeton in 1934, had been teaching at the Maryland School, and also participated in screening the applicants. He evaluated Hoover's application and was instrumental in hiring him.

Hoover was the greatest find in Orientation & Mobility for the blind — which was to manifest itself later. His was an invaluable contribution and the experience he acquired at the Maryland School could not be over-estimated. During Hoover's first year, Warren went to Harvard University to study the field of blindness at the Perkins Institute. He returned to the Maryland School the following year at which time he and Warren became friends, participating in the horseback riding program of the school.

Richard Hoover taught math and physical education. Charlie Chiles, who had been teaching physical education to the older children, was now assigned to teach the younger children and was replaced by the fledgling Hoover at Cottage A. Chiles moved to Cottage B, known as Morrison Hall, which is now the home of the A.E.R. O&M Archives.

Hoover was supervisor to the children around the clock, eating and living with them after school hours. He was also counselor and advisor to boys who were approaching manhood. Hoover coached the wrestling team and later set up the first multi-state wrestling tournament between schools for the blind.

He was a discerning instructor with genuine concern for the mental and physical growth of blind students. Whenever a student would be found inspecting an object with curiosity, Hoover challenged him to question and stimulate his thought processes.

When the children were found listening to their radios when they should have been asleep, they always knew the consequences. He confiscated the radios, sometimes using them to listen to a special program, but never failing to return them before the students woke up, with the dial set where they had it tuned. They always

woke up with the assurance that their radios would be on their bedside tables.

During free hours, just before winding down for the evening, Hoover and Charlie Chiles would head for Hoopers Restaurant in the convenience of Hoover's automobile, "Lulubelle". They often engaged in casual and sometimes serious conversations about politics and the news of the day, but they never failed to recount their experiences of the day at the Maryland School for the Blind. They dealt with the latter subject with much discernment and concern, and before they reached a conclusion, they would have polished off three servings of steamed shrimp and an equal amount of beverages. Charlie, stuffed to the gills with steamed shrimp, would hold up the rear as they left the restaurant.

One of Hoover's idiosyncracies was to kick at the tires to check for their condition, and invariably he would turn to Charlie and say, "Let's go back for more shrimp." Charlie, replete with shrimp, responded, "I would be embarrassed to go back for more after having eaten three servings." Hoover then inquired, "Do you know of another place?" Charlie replied, "There's another fish restaurant on Northern Parkway." Charlie, not-knowing how he would survive the evening, or if he would be faced with the consequences of overeating, went with Hoover. However, Charlie did report that he felt better than he anticipated.

HOOVER'S MILITARY CAREER

Hoover was inducted into the Army in 1942. He took his basic training at Ft. Leonard Wood, was assigned to the combat engineers battalion, and was sent to Ft. Reynolds, which was the processing camp to send soldiers overseas. (Ft. Reynolds was located in Greenville, Pennsylvania.)

Because of his background in Physical Education, a Captain who was in charge of Hoover's company told Hoover he was sending him to special services school at Washington and Lee University in Virginia. Hoover said, "What the hell for?" The Captain replied, "Well, I'm going down"; he went on to say that the Army needs Special Service officers. "We'll go down and see what they have to offer." Thus, the Captain enrolled Pvt. Hoover and they drove to Washington and Lee. Completing two months of training, they returned to Ft. Reynolds. The Captain passed the course by the skin of his teeth, while Hoover had successfully passed with high grades.

Hoover waited for assignment overseas and out of the blue he received a notice to report to the Valley Forge Army General Hospital. Hoover did not know what Valley Forge was, aside from the American revolutionary connotation. Neither did

the Captain know, but he thought if was a hospital of some sort.

The Army was in dire need of men with experience in work for the blind. Thus, Col. Elliott Randolph on the staff of the Army Surgeon's Office went to Superintendent Francis M. Andrews of the Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) for assitance in searching for men with a background in work with the blind, particularly those with Physical Education.

Col. Randolph wasted no time in recruiting Hoover out of the Army Combat Engineers.

When Hoover arrived at Valley Forge he met the staff members who were present there. On the staff were Alan Blackburn who worked at the New York Institute for the Blind; Mort Frankston, formerly placement agent in Pittsburgh; Rosalie Cohen and Martha Miller, formerly social workers in the field for the blind. Shortly thereafter, Ilah Oja, a native of Minnesota who taught at the New York Institute for the Blind, was hired. Later, Louisa Walker came from a residential school for the blind in South Carolina.

Kathern F. Gruber, who was at the American Foundation for the Blind, was instrumental in getting Paul Conlan to Valley Forge when he was recruited into the military. Conlan was involved with work for the blind in the State of Michigan.

The Army was still in need of qualified men and Hoover suggested to Col. Greear that they should recruit C. Warren Bledsoe. Since Bledsoe had already been recommended by Frank Andrews, Col. Randolph did not lose time approaching the Air Corps.

Bledsoe was a Staff Sergeant based at Craig Air Base in Selma, Alabama, as editor of the *Craig Field Journal*. Col. Randolph almost lost Bledsoe to the *Yank Magazine*. At that time, the editor of that magazine had his eyes on Sergeant Bledsoe, who demonstrated remarkable writing and editorial aptitude.

Hoover and Bledsoe were timely occurrences for the Army because Valley Forge Army Hospital in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, was being deluged with war casualties recently wounded in the European Theatre of Operations. Many of them were severely wounded and a great number of them were eye casualties. Russell C. Williams was one of them.

When Bledsoe arrived at Valley Forge, Hoover was already there. During the same time period, Avon was opened to formally rehabilitate blinded soldiers. Alan Blackburn, who was a proponent of "Facial Vision", and Mort Frankston went to Avon with the first group of blinded soldiers.

R.C. Williams states:

When in the Summer of 1944 the cadre of corpsmen left Valley Forge to man the new program at Avon Old Farms, Hoover, then a Corporal, remained at Valley Forge. Valley Forge was a large Army General Hospital with a large eye service as part of its responsibilities. To it were sent the blinded soldiers whose homes were located in the Eastern half of the United States. They reached there as quickly as their battlefield injuries would permit. As the summer went along the war became more widespread and intense, and eye casualties were coming into Valley Forge in increasing numbers.

Hoover, an athletic man with a background in teaching and association with blind people, understood the frustration which the blinded soldiers, fresh from the vigor of combat life, felt from the imprisonment that their blindness imposed to moving around freely. He saw the unhealthy reaction to these frustrations growing into a real morale problem. With Bledsoe as sounding board and confederate, he drew conclusions and as a man of action, he acted.

The departure of Blackburn, Frankston, and the first group of blinded soldiers to Avon caused a serious lack of experienced personnel at Valley Forge, which opened the way for Hoover to use his native inventiveness in addressing himself to the mobility needs with a fresh point of view. In this he used Bledsoe as a sounding board.

HOOVER: FATHER OF THE LIGHTWEIGHT LONG CANE TECHNIQUE

The emergence of Hoover as the Father of the Lightweight Long Cane Technique began in a conference held by Lt. Col. James Greear, Chief of the Eye Service at Valley Forge, when Hoover said, "The first thing the newly blind need is to know how to get around." He went on to say, "People say that blind people in this country do a good job of getting around. I don't think they do a good job. I think they do a hell-of-a-poor job." It ruffled the feathers of the blind and those who shared their handicap who were present at the conference. To say that it was felt as an affront was a monstrous understatement. But they eventually forgave Hoover, became his believers, and one even became his pupil.

In striving to prevent the "Facial Vision" and the civilian pattern of blind

rehabilitation and tradition to prevail, Hoover and Bledsoe had a monumental responsibility of coming up with something to help the blinded soldiers, which turned out to be the revolutionary lightweight long cane travel technique.

Avon fervently believed in facial vision. "It is the ability to detect obstacles through the sensation derived from the phenomenon associated with hearing. Objects intercept sound waves and this absence of sound transfers itself to an illusion of cutaneous sensation. The present day mobility experts term facial vision obstacle perception."

Dr. James Greear sought opinions from Hoover and Bledsoe. In their wisdom they both agreed to the use of the long cane and "foot travel" of the blind. Yet, at Avon Old Farms, Alan Blackburn was making claims for facial vision in such a convincing manner that he had much influence in Washington in determining that his method of training should be the formal procedure for all blind soldiers. Both Hoover and Bledsoe, having several years of experience in working with the blind at the Maryland School, plus several more years with the blinded soldiers at Valley Forge Hospital, could not accept the claims being made for facial vision.

R.C. Williams recalls as follow:

> *Avon Old Farms in Connecticut, to which blinded soldiers were sent when their medical and surgical treatment at Valley Forge was completed, had a mobility program as part of its rehabilitation. Alan Blackburn, Director of Training, and Father Thomas Carroll, Consultant, as prime movers based Avon's mobility program on the belief that if freed and encouraged to move without help of external aids such as canes and dog-guides, the blinded soldiers would develop their internal resources adequately to meet their future mobility needs. No canes were used there, nor were dog-guides. The dictates of the program were opposed to them. Rather, it was taught and dictated that the men could and would develop 'facial vision' and other sensory potentials, and thus be free of the encumbrances of external aids, and the stigma of later being seen as dependent on them. It was an unfortunate attempt at extension of the long known fact that blind people can and do travel around homes, jobs, yards and other well-known places without external aids. Avon was too large and complex for success to be achieved and carried back and used on less controlled environmental routes.*

One of the many problems Hoover and Bledsoe were plagued with from early on was how they were going to teach and train the newly blinded mobility. They decided to observe and study the blinded soldiers who traveled well alone, and how they were able to do it. When they tried to ascertain information from a few of them who were excellent travelers, one claimed he had natural ability, utilizing his alertness, agility and "facial vision". There was another who as an excellent traveler, but Hoover questioned the validity of his proficiency since the soldier had at least one percent field of vision and could have been using residual vision, however minute it may have been. When Hoover asked them if they had a technique which they employed to be such good travelers, they all reported they had none.

YOUNG, DARING INVENTORS AT WORK

It was at that time that Hoover and Bledsoe became fully cognizant that they quickly had to come up with something resourceful. Some of the blinded soldiers were becoming inpatient. They wanted to go on with their lives and go home to visit families and friends. How were Hoover and Bledsoe to accomplish an instant remedy? It was an uphill climb all the way. The hospital did not have enough ward personnel to take the newly blinded to clinics and bathrooms. Most of them could not travel alone and most of them were seriously wounded; some had had extensive surgery. Permitting them to walk alone created problems in some instances, especially for those with plastic surgery. Several years of surgical work was undone because they would hit their injured hands on the radiators which were standing in their way.

Faced with the obvious need to develop a method of travel so the blinded could walk alone without getting hurt — for one with Hoover's cast of talent — necessity was the mother of invention. He thought and talked about the problem constantly with Bledsoe.

During an off hour one Saturday evening, over glasses of Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer, on the second floor of the 10 to 6 Club on Bridge Street in Phoenixville, near Valley Forge Army Hospital, Hoover and Bledsoe seriously pondered the responsibilities of the newly blinded soldiers, particularly in teaching them how to get around. One of the subjects under discussion was the facial vision as it was being taught at Avon. It was Bledsoe who questioned its validity. Hoover, due to his knowledge of Physical Education, concurred with Bledsoe on this matter.

It was now in the wee hours of the night and the tavern was quiet and everybody was gone. Far from being inebriated, their thoughts, already in motion, were

stimulated by the beer they had consumed. Looking at the dishevelled room with a jumbled arrangement of chairs, Hoover said, with a sort of inquiring inflection, "The training officer at Avon says that a blind person using facial vision can get out without touching a single chair?" At that moment, Hoover and Bledsoe looked at each other and burst out laughing almost simultaneously. They knew only too well that it was not possible. Hoover, at that point, said, "We're going to have to use canes." It was then that he started to develop a technique on how to use a cane.

Back at the hospital the next day, Hoover blindfolded himself and began to experiment with different ways of holding the cane and wielding it, starting in the gymnasium and proceeding to more complicated environments. Both Hoover and Bledsoe reached the conclusion that the long cane would be imperative as a mode of blind travel.

R.C. Williams states:

"Hoover pronounced then espoused that men had to use canes for more than display, and they had to be taught how. This teaching, as well as the length of the cane, is the key to its success. Ordinary weight-support canes were too short for what he had in mind so he had some made that were longer and light enough to be wielded easily. He thought that the cane should be held in front of the center of one's body and arced forward and downward while walking to touch in front of the foot that was about to come forward. He did not want this to be nonchalant but to be conspicuously purposeful. Thus, when held and wielded the cane gave protection and gained information about a path in front of the used. His innovations quickly proved their worth and blinded soldiers began to move about on their own and morale improved.

The higher-up applauded his work and brought many new corpsmen for him to train and supervise and promoted him to Lietenant.

Hoover's remarkable innovations, made in an emergency of war with hundreds of blind soldiers collected together in a hospital environment though refined and added to in hardware and teaching methods and adapted for different ages and circumstances of the blind people involved, remained the fundamental underpinnings of modern orientation and mobility programs around the world."

Consequently, Hoover worked very hard in developing the theorem of the

lightweight long cane technique. He read as much literature as he could. One was the work by W. Hanks Levy, the 19th century English authority on the blind, who had written about the cane. Hoover and Bledsoe learned that Levy's emphasis was on the cane touching the ground well ahead at each step but his language seemed to indicate the cane should touch in front of the forward foot. After blindfolding himself and experimenting, Hoover went back to observing the action visually and thereby noticed that the cane should touch in front of the trailing foot, or as he termed it "in arrears", contrary to what he and Bledsoe believed.

With this observation in mind, Hoover blindfolded himself and worked for many days trying everything out as obstacles and small trees. At that point, he decided that the blind had not only to use the cane, but must also employ the techniques he had developed — arcing the cane with the cane always touching the ground ahead of the trailing foot. He also learned that in order for the cane and its techniques to be used properly, the cane had to be of an unusual length and light in weight and held in the center of the body.

The use of Hoover's cane technique had to be taught and very carefully taught in all sorts of conditions and situations in which blind travelers will most likely encounter. One of the first things Hoover and Bledsoe discovered was that nobody picks up the cane and touches the ground in front of the trailing foot naturally. It takes hours and hours to get blind people to do it that way. "It seems to be the opposite of a condition reflex" — Bledsoe.

When the cane is used properly, it can detect down drops such as the edge of platforms and stairs, types of terrain or ground condition, and it can detect sizes and shapes of objects if they are situated in the path of the traveler.

One who has been carefully trained to use the Hoover long cane technique will soon learn that the cane seemingly becomes an appendage to the upper limb which mans the cane, as though the arm went right down to the ground. Consequently, the lightweight long cane becomes a part of the user and it tells him a lot as it comes in contact with the ground, down drops such as stairs and other various obstacles as well as the vibration the cane transmits — R.C. Williams

When a high ranking officer at Valley Forge heard what Hoover and Bledsoe had been espousing about the cane being an essential instrument in a blind person's mobility he literally ordered a truck full of white wooden canes without conferring with them. That is how much Hoover and Bledsoe had come to be respected but not necessarily valued. In a June 2, 1986 interview with Hoover, Bledsoe and Williams,

with Dr. Rick Welsh conducting the interview, Hoover reflected on the days at Valley Forge. Hoover said, "Probably, the wooden canes are still stored in the building at Valley Forge." In essence, what Hoover and Bledsoe were espousing was the lightweight long cane — the "Hoover's Prescription Cane" — which it later came to be known as at Hines, and not the wooden cane.

Col. James Greear was certainly a dyed-in-the-wool friend to Hoover and Bledsoe. He was influential in helping them get what they needed even if he had to bypass chains of command. Greear was a staunch supporter of the long cane travel as it was being developed by the two young men. That is the kind of support and push that the revolutionary technique in blind person's mobility needed to nurture its conception and development in the nascent stage of the long cane history. Because all the cogs fit at the right places and the right time, we as consumers of the Hoover cane technique, not just the blinded veterans, but the blind community throughout the world, benefited.

INSIGHTFUL REFLECTION OF A YOUNG BLINDED SOLDIER

The *Torch* is grateful to Russell C. Williams for his insightful and poignant portrayal of his own experience as a young newly blinded soldier. Because his letter to the *Torch* of June 5, 1989 so vividly described his experiences endured in 1944, the *Torch* could not resist quoting his letter in its entirety. As an early consumer of the Hoover Cane and techniques, Williams was considered by Hoover and Bledsoe to be a star pupil. When Williams had completed his rehabilitation training at Avon Old Farms in Connecticut, he returned home. As he was so valuable to Hoover, Williams was asked to return to Valley Forge, not as a patient, but as a counselor.

After seven weeks of combat, upon arriving in France via Omaha Beach, Russ had been wounded in the left shoulder and just below his left temple by shrapnel from German artillery fire in August 1944 totally blinding him immediately. Thus he became a statistic among the eye casualties. He was sent to Valley Forge General Hospital, Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, on October 9, 1944. (After the war, the hospital was renamed Valley Forge Army Hospital.)

Russ relates:

> *It was Saturday afternoon and a little while after being made comfortable, I was visited by a corpsman who gave me a short wooden cane and taught me to go to the latrine and back. I heard a few others with canes around the ward and could tell there were other patients*

who were blinded like I was. In the course of the evening I made a call home paid for by the Red Cross, and later joined with other blinded soldiers meeting a number of young lady volunteers known as the "Gray Ladies" who came to the ward and we all had a great time bantering, teasing, and laughing. No morale building cheap stuff or patronizing went on. They were well trained and well chosen.

I heard men in nearby beds chattering across the ward. I was not alone in blindness and that was reassuring.

The following Monday morning the ward became a very busy place. A fellow came and offered assistance in managing my breakfast. He showed me the standup locker where I would keep my possessions. The patients dressed in army clothes and each had a locker at the foot of his bed.

In between wound cleansing, dressings and examinations, I was taught some more rudiments of cane use in going about for myself. I didn't go far and was lost far more than I tried to let on. I learned that these fellows were part of a sizeable group who were teaching while helping, and were supervised by Sgt. Hoover. It was only a couple of days until Hoover tried his hand at teaching me more routes through the ward, and it was hard going for both of us, because this was hard stuff to do the way he wanted. This was my first introduction to and encounter with Hoover.

The treatment room was a busy place and the nurses were a great bunch. I got to know their names and those of other blinded patients as we put the hot compresses on our eyes as they passed them to us. Healthy bantering here too, amidst very serious business. As we learned how, we came to the treatment room and other places on our own, and staff personnel did not take over on these trips to minimize our efforts. The efforts were great for all of us as we tried to put together space, turns, sounds, voices, and landmarks without seeing what we were doing.

As I became acquainted with routines, other patients, and personnel, I learned that almost all of us patients or maybe all were totally blinded. Some had legs or arms off and quite a few had severe facial and brain injuries. I found out that as soon as a fellow learned

how, he would eat at the regular mess hall which was way down in the middle of that large hospital. I also learned that some were being taught on the streets of Phoenixville.

It was heartening, but promised to be challenging to a frightening and probably embarrassing degree.

Dick Hoover taught me my first outside travel and I messed a lot of it up. I was grouchy at times as I messed up and he was too. I got over it and I am sure he did too, as he probably got the same reactions from many others. It it more fun to look back on it now than it was at that time as I lurched off course and went the wrong ways on parts of the routes.

We were taught to use the cane in cross-body fashion for our indoor travel. We were taught to use the arc in front method when we went out of doors to travel. Many of the canes were more than the usual length but we were not sensitive in being seen using them and they did protect us and could reach out in front for information.

Valley Forge had many two-story wards with long corridors dissecting them, with other corridors running perpendicular, so that we had lots of travel practice space.

I, like many others, wished we had not needed to come to Valley Forge, but I was sure glad that it was there. I will always remember with affection and respect the personnel there for the way they helped me when I needed them so desperately.

BONA FIDE INVENTORS

As has been stated, the white wooden cane did not meet the specifications Hoover envisioned. For an instruction course in daily travel with the cane, Hoover ascertained that the cane was cumbersome. It was too heavy, too short, and too tiresome to use the cane as a travel aid, and the touch was too heavy and did not transmit vibrations. Therefore, Hoover went to a steel tubing company and told them of their problems. Hoover submitted his specifications as to how the cane should be constructed. Thus, the early revolutionary lightweight long cane was made of steel, even when steel was a rare commodity for civilian use. Steel was so much in demand for the war effort, one could not buy or steal it; but Hoover had a friend there at that steel company and managed to recruit his cooperation. Thus, Hoover was able to get

the canes manufactured to his specifications in weight and length. The first canes were called the "Bo Peep Cane" because of the deep crook of the handle to protect the hand.

UNFORESEEN SKIRMISH

Although Hoover and Bledsoe were making a significant dent and indelible mark in orientation and mobility, it was still not a cake walk for them. When they decided not to use a blind person's advice to teach the blind to travel but to rely on their own research, it opened up another can of worms. When the American Foundation for the Blind and other agencies heard what Hoover and Bledsoe practiced, they approached the Surgeon General's Office and demanded that the activities regarding the blinded soldiers be investigated. The investigating committee included: Irwin, Kathern Gruber, Pete Salmon, Mrs. Leigh Johnson, Father Tom Carroll, and several others. Gruber and Carroll observed the program carefully at Valley Forge and became convinced that Hoover and Bledsoe were on the up and up. These two young men got a favorable report from this committee. As a result, they did not have any problem from the Army, but still continued to have trouble with agencies who were still skeptical.

STANDARDIZING PROCEDURES

Hoover set criteria as to who would become mobility instructors. He had the full cooperation of Col. Greear who wasted no time in getting rid of those who did not meet Hoover's requirements. Thus, from early on in the field of mobility, the screening of applicants played an important role. Because of the quality of the mobility instructors, Bledsoe explained there was an air of "class" and high morale prevailed in the ward. He explained further that there was no rank among the orientors. The staff sergeants had to prove themselves. Hoover and Bledsoe established a list of do's and don'ts. In order to stress the do's and don'ts, Hoover and Bledsoe avoided the pedantic approach which might have defeated their purpose. They utilized the artistic ability of Bill Tigani, who conveyed the do's and don'ts through his art work in the form of cartoons.

Implicit in these cartoons were respect and courtesy for the individual.

9

Picture carefully what move the patient is about to make in order that exact directions may be given. Be helpful by looking ahead and anticipating. Especially avoid mixing right and left. This is frequently done if you are not careful when you are facing him and causes much confusion.

25

Do not be too forward toward well-meaning people when they make mistakes in their relations with the patients. You cannot without embarrassment give a course on the spur of the moment in how people without sight should be treated.

At one point, the lower ranking officers in the Ophthalmology Department felt that the mobility staff was getting above themselves. Through Col. Elloitt Randolph (who had replaced Col. Greear), they attempted to get these men to do orderly work cleaning the ward. In one of the meetings, Randolph approached Hoover, asking him, "Would it be beneath the dignity of your orientation men to clean up the ward?" Hoover replied, "Aside from that, Colonel, they wouldn't have time to teach the blinded soldiers how to get around." No more was said about ward-cleaning after that exchange.

By this time, the new blinded soldiers, some hampered by serious surgery, were traveling about quite independently. Col. Greear was very pleased with the progress Hoover and Bledsoe were making. Gradually, the work of Hoover reached the top brass of the Army.

In 1945, Bledsoe was detached to Dibble Army Hospital, Menlo, California, to teach the Hoover method as practiced at Valley Forge. At Dibble Army Hospital, the anti-cane doctrine had been accepted as gospel by eye chief Col. Norman Cutler. There they were, all inalterably opposed to teaching mobility as in progress at Valley Forge. Consequently, Bledsoe met with opposition but a willing trainee was none the less discovered with whom it was possible to demonstrate the Hoover technique which many Dibble patients sought after the war, which at that time was winding down.

Hoover stated,

> The cane cannot determine direction, cannot hear, cannot talk, smell or think, and the cane cannot furnish energy nor can it see.

Yet, Hoover's long cane design and the techniques he developed in the use of that cane could very well fit the description by a journalist of the past who said of the moderately long cane used by a blind mentor, Sir Francis Campbell: "It had a brain, could almost talk, and ought to vote." Hoover's long cane and techniques in the use of that cane became more than foot travel. It evolved into a science now known as Orientation & Mobility, the terminology which took hold in the 50s. The remarkable nature of Hoover's long cane, and the efficacy with which it was being taught, and more importantly, training sighted personnel to teach mobility to the blind, proved Hoover's design and techniques to be valid and reliable. Thus a new profession was born.

OFF TO MEDICAL SCHOOL

Col. Elliott Randolph observed Hoover from a professional vantage point. He was quite impressed with Hoover and therefore encouraged him to enroll in the school of medicine at Johns Hopkins, with which Randolph was affiliated. As a matter of fact, Randolph was so enthusiastic about Hoover, he gave him his first microscope.

Concurrently, Bledsoe was becoming involved in a greater plan, namely, the establishment of the first VA Blind Rehabilitation program. General Omar Bradley, the VA Administrator, appointed him to be the Coordinator of Blind Veterans' Affairs in September of 1947. Bledsoe vigorously recruited Hoover to head an Orientation & Mobility program at Hines. But, it was already too late. Col. Randolph has spurred him on into medicine.

Hoover thought that he could be of better service to the blind by becoming an ophthalmologist to help correct their problems where possible, rather than to merely teach them to get around as blind persons. He became of even greater service by becoming a doctor — for he is known as the only prominent person in the field of Ophthalmology to have interpreted the problems of the blind to his fellow physicians.

Thus, immediately after the military, Hoover did enroll into the school of medicine. However, Hoover late in his life revealed he had a brief period where he considered becoming a general practitioner, not pursuing the field of ophthalmology as Randolph had urged him to do. But Randolph needn't have worried, because Dr. Fredenwald, an ophthalmologist, would not hear of it.

When he heard Hoover talking about becoming a general practitioner as he was finishing medical school, Fredenwald told him he would absolutely block him from doing so. Thus, Hoover entered into the field of ophthalmology. (Fredenwald was a prominent ophthalmologist, a man of broad and prolific ideas, belonging to an elite club of six intellectuals. Albert Einstein was one of them — Hoover was in good company.)

After completing the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in 1950, at the advice of Dr. Fredenwald, Hoover took post-graduate medical education, serving as an intern in ophthalmology at Johns Hopkins Wilmer Institute during 1950-51. At that same Institute, he served as an Assistant Resident and was a Kellogg Fellow in Ophthalmology.

As for academic and hospital appointments at John Hopkins Hospital and School of Medicine, he was an Assistant, an Instructor, and an Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology.

At Baltimore City Hospital, Hoover served as a Consultant Ophthalmologist. Also at that same hospital he was active on the surgical staff in Ophthalmology, in the eye, ear, nose and throat section.

Hoover was active on the surgical staff in Ophthalmology at the Maryland General Hospital.

He served as Chief of Ophthalmology, Presbyterian Charity Hospital, and later as Chief of Ophthalmology at the Greater Baltimore Medical Center, where he also served as Vice Chief of Staff.

Richard Hoover was associated with the Maryland School for the Blind from early manhood to the close of his life. Besides having taught at MSB, he became the school Ophthalmologist from 1962 until 1986 and as a member of the Board from 1973 until 1986.

FROM INFANCY TO MATURITY

Hoover's long cane and techniques were now out of the cradle stage. They were transferred to the newly established blind center at Hines, Illinois, in 1948. Bledsoe and Williams were appointed to create an environment in which Hoover's theories could be incorporated as a part. They had to be overwhelmingly convinced that Hoover's techniques were indeed valid and reliable for application, or otherwise be met with colossal failure. The emphasis at Hines was mobility. In essence, it was the ballast of the fledgling program which ultimately proved its worth with the passage of time, refinement, and experience.

R.C. Williams recalls: "In Washington, preparing for Hines to start, Bledsoe tried to interest some of the orientors who had served at Valley Forge but who were now long discharged, in coming to Hines. None accepted the offer. Bledsoe achieved an unbelievable feat when he secured a starting civil service grade for orientors above the journeyman grade for persons working in the V.A., such as therapists in occupational therapy, corrective therapy and others. This increased salary was a real recruitment attraction due to the money involved but it also could be interpreted as V.A.'s belief in the program which was coming into being.

Hines had the largest physical medicine staff in the country, corrective therapy which had grown out of World War II in the European Theatre of Operations in Stoneleigh, England, under Col. Frank Stinchfield and Col. Marcus Stewart, was a part of it.

Bledsoe remarked that the men trained by Carl Purcell — who was a Stinchfield man from the war years in England — were ideally suited to become mobility instructors based on their background and training. It was his opinion that these men were superior trainers to those who were at Valley Forge.

R.C. Williams says:

> *Carl Purcell, a generous man, was in charge of Corrective Therapy. He, in looking for opportunities for any of his men to better themselves, encouraged his C.T.s to see about working in the new blind center. Twelve applied and were interviewed, and five were chosen. Four: Edward "Bud" Thuis, Edward Mees, Alford DeWitt Corbett, and Stan Suterko, remained in Orientation & Mobility until their retirement many years later. The fifth gave it up shortly after being chosen and moved to other fields.*

The four were trained by Bledsoe, Miss Gruber, and Williams. This training went on for many weeks before the first patient came to Hines for blind rehabilitation and for many months afterward.

Lawrence E. Blaha joined the staff in January 1949, and in September of that same year John Malamazian transferred from C.T. to the blind center.

For the next several years, these six men were the pioneers to teach the first classes on the Hoover Long Cane and the techniques in the use of that cane. As they learned among themselves they began to experiment and teach one another to do it better, thus refining the original technique. R.C. Williams states: "Experimentation by the men at Hines determined the procurement of unusually long canes which were cut and tipped for individual differences. From the start, up to 135 50-minute periods were devoted to O&M. The blinded veterans were taught to center their canes, touch the ground in front of the trailing foot from the start indoors and continuing outdoors." Therefore, it was at this stage of the long cane history that Hoover's innovation acquired the name Hoover's Prescription Cane.

Hoover, who was one of three VA Consultants, and was then studying medicine at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, came to Hines when he could and helped. During this period, he also spent time at the Maryland School for the Blind and taught the long cane technique to the students there. Thus, MSB was the first civilian school to have taught the long cane technique concurrently with the Hoover technique that was progressing at Hines Blind Center.

The aforementioned six pioneers in O&M at Hines were the basic teachers of the blinded veterans. The skills they taught, according to Williams, were: "manual, communications, personal, social, and recreational."

Hoover's theories were nutured, developed, and refined so significantly by these men that they caught the eyes not only of local agencies but of the world. Yet, the techniques are constantly being refined at CBRC, WBRC, EBRC, SEBRC, and the VA clinics throughout the country.

During the early years at Hines, the Hoover techniques acquired a measure of sophistication. They matured rapidly with refinements and innovations as they were confronted with blinded veterans with multiple handicaps, specifically, blinded veterans with loss of upper limb and/or loss of lower limb, who could not man a cane because they did not have a hand, or their mobility depended upon a pair of crutches, etc. The pioneers then had to be highly resourceful in teaching them the mobility needed to suit their special and unique requirements.

Today, electronic travel aids are being invented, some of which are in current use. In spite of their dawning, the Hoover Prescription Cane has yet to take a lesser role.

TAKING CARE OF PERSONAL MATTERS

After Hoover had accomplished his goal in the field of medicine, he found enough time to take care of personal matters the second time around. He met Lydia Payne; they were wed December 1959 and were blessed with two handsome sons, Brinton Huston, and Stewart Payne.

HOOVER'S WORK ACCOMPLISHED

Dr. Richard Edwin Hoover became a victim of cancer. After several years of battle with that illness, ironically, Dr. Hoover succumbed on Monday, July 7, 1986 on the week of the 2nd A.E.R. convention which was being convened at the McCormick Place in Chicago. (The alliance of the American Association of Workers for the Blind, A.A.W.B., and the Association for the Education of the Visually Handicapped, A.E.V.H., was announced at the 1984 convention held in Nashville, Tennessee. They consolidated into A.E.R., thus, the convention held in Chicago was the second conclave. The A.E.R. henceforth convenes every two years on the even numbered years.) Dr. Rick Welsh had the responsibility of announcing to his A.E.R peers that Hoover's suffering was all over.

He announced it on Tuesday, July 8, 1986 when two young energetic women, Peggy Madera and Judy Davidhizar Holmes were presented the O&M Division "Citation for Excellence and Direct Service", the first of its kind ever awarded. These two young women demonstrated dedication and exemplary O&M conduct of which Dr. Hoover would have been proud. Dr. Richard Hoover may now rest in peace knowing that the young men and women will forever assert and aspire to his standard of performance. To accentuate that day, a mobility instructor whom Hoover had a direct influence in teaching the Hoover's lightweight long cane technique during the early years at Hines, Walter G. Olenek, was a recipient of the Lawrence E. Blaha Memorial Award.

Therefore, Hoover's passing was not endured in vain. His stewardship on earth ended with the day devoted in rewarding those who ascribe and aspire to his standards.

CONCLUSION

The timely occurrences of Richard Edwin Hoover and Charles Warren Bledsoe were almost providential, particularly when the Army was in need of men with experience in work with the blind. Young Hoover was a creative inventor who developed the lightweight long cane technique. From early on he was cognizant of the importance of Bledsoe as a sounding board and scribe to keep their efforts honest, valid and reliable. Hoover and Bledsoe were visionary and discerning young men, ready to challenge anything, including Don Quixote's windmills. Yet, in all of this they did not lose sight of the fact that they needed a leader to carry on the torch; otherwise, the lightweight long cane technique might have ended and died at Valley Forge Army Hospital. They needed someone to give impetus to their theory of the lightweight long cane technique. Bledsoe had the wisdom to convince Hoover in the selection of Russell C. Williams, a recently blinded veteran of World War II, who had intrinsic ability as a leader. It was under Williams' leadership that Hoover's revolutionary cane technique "sky-rocketed" at Hines Blind Center. It was, therefore, at this facility that Hoover's invention was refined, enriched and acquired a significant measure of sophistication, particularly in rehabilitating the severely disabled blinded veterans returning home from the Korean War.

The cane technique Hoover established as guidelines for the blind to learn to travel was a practical procedure. With professional explanation people could be made to understand what his theories were and how they could be executed with professional training. Hoover remarked while the cane technique is not complicated or mysterious, "people should not be expected to learn in ten easy lessons." Learning to use the cane and employ good techniques Hoover likens to the art of golfing. The astonishing fact is that they could professionally train the sighted to teach the blind. Gradually those who were professionally trained came to be known as Orientation & Mobility Specialists. Since the newly blinded must place their implicit trust in their teacher, properly trained personnel became valuable instructors of mobility.

Hoover's significant contributions lit the pathways of the blind, affording them a gateway to independence and freedom.

Let us hope that Dr. Richard Edwin Hoover and his innovative and revolutionary approach to the mobility of the blind will not fade from mortal memory as the years relentlessly roll on. May we also hope that the ideals of Dr. Hoover and the providential pioneers, advanced so courageously, will persist. Let his ideals of common sense and Warren Bledsoe's statement of firm beliefs and conviction prevail with the generations of O&M specialists yet to follow. Let them assert and aspire to the principles of these two great men. Let their efforts not be obscured by anyone.

For your monumental contributions to the blinded veterans and to the blindness community, the *CBRC Torch* salutes you posthumously, Dr. Richard Edwin Hoover.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

1. Mrs. Lydia Paine Hoover for her consent and cooperation for this salute to Dr. Hoover.
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14. My late brother, Sueo, for the artwork on the cover of this salute and the maskhead. The maskhead was designed in December 1986 when the Torch was first published. The artwork for the cover was done in 1984 with the intentions of using the same artwork for all salutes. For the salute to the 826th Medical Rehab. Center my late brother's colleague, Robert Yamane, was the artist who designed the cover as a special favor to the Torch. Both Sueo and Robert were co-art-editors for the 1948 McKinley High School yearbook. Since my brother's death Robert has been doing all the major artwork for the Torch without remuneration. All of the miscellaneous artworks were done by Ken Stoffregen of Color Key Printing.
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20. Bob Gockman, Asst. Chief, for consulting his creation of the O&M skit published in this issue.
21. To all of you who had a part in the production of the Torch but was inadvertantly left out from the list of acknowledgments and to those wishing to retain anonymity, we say Mahalo for your Kokua — which simply means thank you for your help.

DEDICATION OF A MAN ON BLINDNESS

CREATIVENESS AND RESOURCEFULNESS OF THE O&M'ERS OF YESTERYEAR

The following skit is from the original skit performed at the Annual Orientation and Mobility Non Conference held in Chicago. The narrator was Bill McCloskey and the so called "Hines Symphonic Orchestra" was composed of Rick Hilner, Jim Enzinna, Irene Tye, Gary T. Schultz and Bob Gockman, all members of the Hines Orientation and Mobility staff. The instruments used are the banjo, guitar, kazoo, harmonica and tamborine. The song "Give Me That Orientation and Mobility" used the theme or tune of "Give Me That Old Time Religion."

"Give Me That Orientation and Mobility"

NARRATOR: (In the manner of folksinger, Arlo Guthie) "This is a story about the early history of cane travel when such notable characters such as Hoover and Williams and Bledsoe and Suterko and Blasch and Malamazian were around."

"They were the inventors, the tinkers and the means by which Hines and other venerable institutions like Western Michigan University were born."

"In those days not only did these mighty forefathers invent the cane and the technique to go with it, they invented "CANE COURTESY" . . . If no other words could describe it. Yes, they were the Emily Posts' of caneology. And the rest of the story comes after the chorus. So, lets' all join in on this easy rendition of, "GIVE ME THAT ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY".

MUSICIANS: Here the musicians bring up the volume while the narrator asks the audience to sing along. He gives them the words before each line is sung.

"GIVE ME THAT ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY",
"GIVE ME THAT ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY",
"GIVE ME THAT ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY",
"IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME".

When sufficient volume has been reached, the narrators will then go to the second part.

"IF IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR HOOVER",
"IF IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR STANLEY",
"IF IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR STEAMER",
"IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME".

NARRATOR: "We didn't mean to sneak in that last name, "Steamer" on everyone but thats' John Malamazians' old nick name from his high school and college football days, and it rhymes a whole lot better than Mal-a-maz-ian! Anyways, to get back to the subject at hand, for this historical event of having a real-live blind person get up and walk down a real-live street, with real-live people staring at him was quickly approaching the launching pad. Not only were the Hines Hospital Historicals concerned with the idea of a blind person traveling in a relatively straight line, they would insist on each and everyone of them being a diplomat, representing blind people everywhere. So, the verse goes like this . . ."

"I WAS WALKIN' DOWN THE CORRIDOR",
"WITH MY CANE SWINGIN' LIKE IT OUGHTA",
"I WAS WALKIN' DOWN THE CORRIDOR",
"WHEN A POST BUMPED INTO ME".

NARRATOR: "Those posts are tricky devils". Again, the musicians and the narrators continue with . . .

"THAT'S WHEN STEAMER TURNED TO STANLEY",
"THAT'S WHEN STEAMER TURNED TO STANLEY",
"THAT'S WHEN STEAMER TURNED TO STANLEY",
(All musicians and narrator come to a full stop)
. . . "AND SAID",
"HE DIDN'T SAY, PARDON ME!"

NARRATOR: "Well;, the historically early patient was reminded in no uncertain historical terms that it was much better to say, "Excuse me," whenever he bumped into a proper noun, like a person, place or post — and regardless of whether it was a post or not didn't matter one bit. Courtesy was the password and the blind patient was carrying the responsibility of an embryonic institution . . . the likes of which had not ever been seen!!"

"And so this poor, lonely but extremely courteous traveler finds his way out of the hospital and into the nearby community of Maywood." (Here the song progresses to . . .)

"THEN I GRADUATED TO MAYWOOD",
"THEN I MOVED OUT INTO MAYWOOD",
"THAT'S WHEN I MOVED OUT INTO MAYWOOD",
"WHERE I BUMPED INTO A TREE".

(Repeat the chorus of . . .)

"THAT'S WHEN STEAMER TURNED TO STANLEY",

"THAT'S WHEN STEAMER TURNED TO STANLEY",

"THAT'S WHEN STEAMER TURNED TO STANLEY",

(Full stop again with narrator saying . . .)

"AND SAID",

"HE DIDN'T SAY PARDON ME".

NARRATOR: "Well, you could see that the patient didn't stand a chance. He was going to be polite to these proper nouns even if they didn't answer him back. And so, after 18 weeks of serious work in the fine art of using the "Long Stick", our happy patient now wings,

"NOW I KNOW ALL ABOUT MOBILITY",

(Times Three Repeats)

"WHEN I BUMP INTO A POST OR TREE",

"I SAY, PLEASE PARDON ME".

NARRATOR & ENTIRE CHORUS:

"GIVE ME THAT ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY",

(Times Three Repeats)

"IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME . . . THE END"

EDITOR'S NOTE

It seems almost foolhardy for an unpolished writer to write about Dr. Richard Hoover, muchless the past efforts on the salutes to Bledsoe and Williams. Unfortunately, writing happens not to be one of my innate abilities. Therefore, my inadequacies are evident in my compositions. I only wish I was endowed with the gift of writing.

C. Warren Bledsoe, the son of the late past superintendent of the Maryland School for the Blind, was of gentle birth, born and reared in a social and educational environment and could not help but become an infinitely talented writer. He had an Ivy League education in his youth, attending Princeton, where he was highly influenced by the English department faculty of which Willard Thorp, Professor of Belletres, had the most impact upon Bledsoe's edcucation.

Hence, the writings of C. Warren Bledsoe who became the scribe and a philosophical historian in the early years of the lightweight long cane history, were used as references making a poor writer's work appear impressive, however sophomoric his attempts may have been.

Therefore, yours truly is greatly indebted to Bledsoe who was the source of inspiration for yours truly to have the desire to pick up the pen and write whether or not I am a bonafide writer.

Furthermore, with the direct assistance of Bledsoe's pen as well as Russell C. Williams input, a salute for Dr. Richard E. Hoover was made possible.

Stephen Miyagawa
Editor

C.B.R.C. TORCH

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FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND
& PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED
POSTAL MANUAL PART 135

C.B.R.C. TORCH

"Let it light the pathways of the blind, that their dignity may be restored."

September, 1988

SALUTES

BLIND CENTER
VAH HINES IL

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23. Thanks to all those who had a part in the production of this Torch whose names are not mentioned or inadvertently left out.

Mahalo to all for your much needed kokua.

PREFACE

Writing about Mr. C. Warren Bledsoe was not an easy task. Discretional editing is sadly lacking and I attribute it to my inadequacy in journalism. I did, however, begin the salute to Bledsoe as the result of the prompting of my wife, Wanda, and my late brother, Sueo, who designed the cover for the salute.

The concept of the "salute" was not uniquely mine. While it was being borne in mind, Dick White and Marv Halladay — both blinded veterans — were thinking about giving tribute to the pioneers of Hines Blind Center. They shared my appreciation for all that the Blind Center has meant to us. Thus, with Chief James Whitehead's approval, I moved Bledsoe's salute from the back burner to the front burner. I collected information on Warren Bledsoe in earnest to finally complete the salute which had begun in 1984 when I was editor of the *Illinois BVA Voice* under Dick White, then the president, and the most supportive of my efforts. May I also include Marv Halladay, Walter Olenek, Gala Saber-Brooks, Mrs. Ellen Papadimoulis (VIST Coordinator in Ohio), as being supportive. The cover was completed in early 1984, and an article on Bledsoe finally put together this year.

I do not know Warren personally, but in the process of putting an article together I have learned to respect and love this man who sacrificed his own goals as a writer of novels. For this salute, when I spoke with Russ Williams, Donald Blasch, the late John Malamazian, and Dr. Lee Farmer, they were like a magnetic compass all pointing to Warren. It was Russ Williams who was the first to attribute the name "godfather" to Warren Bledsoe, when I was gathering materials in 1982 for the HBCA testimonials on candidates for Honorary Life Membership. The late Dr. Richard E. Hoover referred me to Bledsoe for historical facts and correct spelling of names, and date.

As a progeny of John Francis Bledsoe, Superintendent of the Maryland School for the Blind and an educator in the blindness field, Warren was an extension of his father in helping to restore the dignity of the blind.

Establishing a blind rehabilitation program for blinded veterans, Warren knew it would not be an easy job. His efforts were met with skirmishes, battles not physical in nature but of mind and wit. Where others might have quit, Warren clung on tenaciously. It was in Bledsoe's nature to help war-blinded individuals assume their rightful place in society and get the opportunity to be upright citizens. Had it not been for Warren, there might not have been a V.A. Blind Rehabilitation program. It was he who put it all together.

FOREWORD

If Warren Bledsoe had not been around during World War II and after, affairs for blinded veterans would have been very different. He was really the philosophical molder of the Blind Rehabilitation program at Valley Forge General Hospital during World War II.

Although not conspicuous in what he did, nevertheless, I have come to realize over the past forty years that it was he who kept the environment around the Hines program a healthy and honest one. In looking back, I can see that some of the others who had influence would not have been able to keep themselves from drifting into cynicism and doubt — and this Warren never did. He was strong enough, though subtle, to keep others thinking in positive ways .... If Warren had not been willing to give up his great desire for writing novels to help the Veterans Administration out after World War II, I do not think that agency would have had a Blind Center.

Russell C. Williams

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FOREWORD

To the men and women whose unselfish and dedicated efforts contributed to the first VA Blind Rehabilitation Center at Hines, we are eternally indebted. Through their innovative work came the launching of new skills, new programs, and a new philosophy that marked the upgrading of services for the visually impaired. Years later, that philosophy still continues to spread and touch the lives of blind people well beyond our shores.

Of these pioneers, Warren Bledsoe has distinguished himself in a life dedicated to quality services for the visually impaired. He played a critical and essential role in the birth of a fledgling program and new profession. If fate has a place in the natural scheme of human events, Warren Bledsoe was the right person, at the right time, for the right job. Few people in reviewing their accomplishments can be guaranteed, as Warren has, that the good they created will live on long after their life's journey. We applaud Warren Bledsoe, not only for his contributions, but for a legacy of excellence.

J. J. Whitehead
Chief
Central Blind Rehabilitation Center

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

1. C. Warren Bledsoe
2. Russell C. Williams
3. Donald Blasch
4. Stan Suterko
5. Lee Farmer
6. Late John D. Malamazian
7. Gala Saber-Brooks
8. Walter G. Olenek
9. Kathern Gruber
10. Rich Russo
11. Alvin S. Chiles
12. Bill McCloskey
13. Rolly Schwartz

In the words of Isaiah:

"I will bring the blind by a way they knew not;
I will lead them in paths which they have not known;
I will make darkness light before them . . . .
These things I will do unto them and not forsake them."

C. WARREN BLEDSOE: GODFATHER OF V.A. BLIND REHABILITATION

by STEPHEN MIYAGAWA

Eye casualties had long been one of the byproducts of armed hostilities among warring nations, and truly effective rehabilitation not necessarily guaranteed for the wounded soldiers. When a program for blind World War I soldiers had early successes, but then failed, it consequently became even more difficult to establish a rehabilitation program for the men and women in wars that would follow. However, the blinded veterans were blessed with fortune by the timely existence of C. Warren Bledsoe whose vision, hopes and dreams enkindled a symbolic eternal torch through his intelligence, wisdom, diligence, diplomacy and perseverance.

Equipped with the above character and traits, Warren forged ahead to expand the horizon of the blind person's mobility with the spirit to challenge the obstructions within the V.A. system as well as the mode of foot travel which predominated during the early part of World War II.

As expressed by current HBC Chief James J. Whitehead, "If it weren't for Bledsoe's strong convictions, high ideals, and bulldog tenacity, today there would not be rehabilitation programs for blinded veterans within the Veterans Administration . . . fate placed him well in time."

We owe homage to this man who, at a youthful 36, was instrumental in establishing the Hines Blind Center. As stated by Gala Saber-Brooks, "It was through Warren's herculean efforts that the program from Valley Forge was transferred to V.A. Hines Hospital in Hines, Illinois . . . ." This program has remained in existence from some 40 years since its inception on July 6, 1948, and thus the story unfolds.

GRANDFATHER: John F. Bledsoe

When Warren was presented the Lawrence E. Blaha Memorial Award — a

long-overdue recognition by the Orientation & Mobility Division of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired — on June 25, 1984, in Nashville, Tennessee, Gala said in her presentation, "How many of us can say that we were born into the field of blind rehabilitation? Warren can! When he arrived in this world, his father was the innovative superintendent of the Maryland School for the Blind." The moral fiber of an educator was thrust upon him, nurtured through a familial association immersed in the learning milieu. In the words of Lee Farmer, also a recipient of the Lawrence E. Blaha award, and who himself has achieved giant stature in the O&M field, "I have said over the years since I met Warren, that he is the only congenital O&M person in our field."

C. Warren Bledsoe descended from a remarkable family. His father, John Francis Bledsoe, born in Alabama during 1869, was the son of John F. Bledsoe who headed one of the earliest colleges for women in Eastern Alabama — LaFayette Female College, which, unfortunately, lasted for only ten years due to the onset of the Civil War bringing its financial difficulties. (Let us note here that the "F" in John F. Bledsoe's name is an initial only, and does not represent a middle name.) While the college was in existence, it was a remarkable institution for those times, offering the same curriculum to female students as other colleges did to male students. Besides being a man of considerable learning, skilled in Greek and Latin, he was progressive even at age fifty — when he learned French and to play the piano. While the Bledsoes lived on their farm in Eastern Alabama, John Francis' father was also a minister, serving three or four small Baptist congregations. He introduced contour plowing there long before its general use elsewhere.

FATHER: John Francis Bledsoe

Education and constructive dynamism were a way of life for John Francis. He attended Birmingham's Howard College, later known as Samford College. At his graduation time, its president held an invitation from Gallaudet College for the Deaf, asking graduates to apply for training courses in teaching the deaf. Therefore, John Francis ventured up North to Washington, D.C., for that course and was in its first class of teachers.

There were four in that class: John Francis, who returned to teach in an Alabama school for the deaf; Percival Hall, later president of Gallaudet College, with Charles Ely who became a professor at Gallaudet; and Dr. Thomas McAloney to become head of West Pennsylvania School for the Blind and also Colorado School for the Blind and Deaf.

After five years in Alabama, John Francis was invited to Maryland School for the Blind in Baltimore, the first black school for the blind. Although it was a segregated school at that time, he enjoyed his five years there before becoming head of Baltimore's white school for the blind in 1906.

While in Alabama he had met and married a teacher who was a Boston University graduate, but that marriage was short-lived, lasting only six months due to her death in 1899. However, her background of working with the blind spurred John Francis to attend summer courses in education of the blind at Harvard University, which depended heavily on the nearby library of the Perkins School for the Blind, and even more heavily on the magnetic interpretation of the books by Michael Anagnos, the school's director, who captivated John Francis by expounding classic theories of his own mentor, the pioneer Samuel Gridley Howe who had founded the Perkins School. This led Bledsoe to reorganize the Maryland School by taking it out of its palace-like building in the city to a 100-acre farm on the out-skirts of Baltimore. He instituted the first all-cottage family-plan school for the blind in the world — even before Perkins — yet always credited that theory as having been conceived by Samuel Gridley Howe who never fully implemented it at Perkins. By 1911, the Maryland School was completely reconstructed. Upon this piece of land four cottages had been built, two for girls and two for boys, with 25 pupils each. The Bledsoes resided on the premises in a magnificent heavy stone building, architecturally sound and appropriately suited to entertain educators of the blind who came to visit.

John Francis supervised both schools — the school for the black deaf and blind children located on the hill west of the school for the white children.

A portion of this 100 acres was devoted to farming three apple orchards, and tomatoes, celery, sweet corn, strawberries, etc. When there was a bumper crop, the produce was sold to adjacent communities. "Charlie" Chiles, a teacher at Maryland School and later at Hines, recalls eating huge and delicious strawberries five times a day — with still more for any who wished more. There were three to four year-round farmers taking care of this operation which even boasted a cider press near the power plant so apples could be steam-cleaned before processed into cider.

At Johns Hopkins, John Francis took higher education courses in Political Science equivalent to a Ph.D., but never pursued a doctorate because his time and energy were spent rebuilding and reorganizing the school for the blind; he was one

of few superintendents of the schools at that time who kept constant watch over what was being done in the development of government programs.

He was vice-president on the Board of the American Printing House for the Blind, and active for 25 years having a great deal to do, along with the American Foundation for the Blind, in obtaining appropriations for Braille books.

John Francis was a quiet man and never a self-promoter. People had a lot of respect for him which made it self-evident at the conventions.

When John Francis died in 1947, he left instructions with the *Baltimore Sun* that any memorial was to be aimed at improving the situation for black, deaf and blind children. Subsequently, in the early 1950s the schools began their integration process.

EMERGENCE OF THE GODFATHER

SON: C. Warren Bledsoe

Warren was indeed born "into the field" as indicated by Gala Saber-Brooks in her speech — he was a "chip off the old block"; absorbed in an environment of education, culture, social and progressive innovations and experiments for the blind.

While the Maryland School for the Blind was blessed with John Francis who embarked on his monumental work at age 37, so too was blind rehabilitation 42 years later, when his son, Warren, at age 36, embarked upon his own monumental endeavor: development of the V.A. Hines Blind Rehabilitation Center, a first in V.A. history and now with 40 years in service.

At the turn of the century, John Francis was already a widower — but his life did not end there. Later, he and Edna Seal, a widow, married and with much courage and optimism rebuilt their lives. To this union were born John Francis, Jr., Virginia, and Warren — the only living member of the immediate family. (George Krebs was Edna's son from a previous marriage.) Warren was born July 15, 1912, at the Maryland School a year after it occupied its current location. With their Airedales roaming the house, warmth, happiness and laughter overflowed in the Bledsoe home as children of relatives, and also others whose parents had died, were taken in and the school reimbursed for their board.

Whenever educators of the blind came to visit, however distinguished they were, the children, including those blinded, sat at the same table and were allowed to listen to the conversations and even participate on appropriate occasions.

Warren attended Gilman School which was modeled after old English public

schools where, upon completing the first six "forms" (grades), students went on to finish the next six. He commuted nine miles each way in a car which did not protect one too much from the winter cold in spite of its isinglass curtains. The school day was long, due in part to an emphasis on athletics as well as demands of basic curriculum.

He went to Princeton in 1930, graduated with honors in 1934, and returned to Maryland School to teach English, Drama, and, occasionally, History. Warren, of course, directed theatrical plays, opening participation to the entire school instead of seniors only. To encourage and promote younger students, the shows were broken down into eight or nine short skits, much like a Broadway Revue. They not only attracted the student body but communities around who packed the 500-seat auditorium to its capacity for each showing even dress rehearsals. His productions retained their popularity as long as he remained. "Charlie" Chiles recalls making the props and backdrops for these shows.

In 1938-39, he took what had evolved into a full year's course in education of the blind, operated jointly by Harvard and the Perkins School. It was at this this time Richard E. Hoover came to Maryland where Warren screened his application. (Hoover later proved to be one of the greatest finds in Orientation & Mobility.)

Apprenticeship

John Francis was in ill health then and Warren knew his father's career was coming to an end. So that the members of his staff be clearly out of a new superintendent's way, Warren resigned from the Maryland School in September 1941. He had written a novel entitled, *Fiddle Longspay,* selling it for publication the following year. John Francis retired June, 1942 while Warren was in the Air Force public relations office at Craig Air Base, Selma, Alabama, and editor of the *Craig Field Journal.* His aptitude for writing and editing caught the eye of the *Yank Magazine* editor who requested Warren be transferred to that office. Simultaneously, however, Colonel Elliot Randolph of the Surgeon General of the Army's staff heard of Warren and his background with the blind and also Richard Hoover, then in an Army Engineer's outfit. They seemed ideal personnel for what the Army was thinking about for Valley Forge, triggered by an increasing number of eye casualties returning home, soldiers instantly blinded not too many days previously. The Army was searching for experienced men in this sphere and they could have found no finer than Warren Bledsoe and Richard Hoover. So, by 1944, when Warren arrived

at Valley Forge in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, Hoover was already there, and together they developed the lightweight Long Cane technique.

Technical Maneuvers

In 1945, Warren was detached to Dibble Army Hospital, Menlo, California, to teach the Hoover method as practiced at Valley Forge. Upon arriving, he found the "anti-cane doctrine" had been accepted as "gospel" by eye chief, Colonel Norman Cutler; moreover, blind staff members hired by Colonel Cutler each thought they should be in charge of the program. All inalterably opposed teaching of mobility as in progress at Valley Forge! (The sighted instructors complained that blind staff members had a habit of following closely while they were on lesson with a blind soldier, and telling him that he didn't have to do anything sighted people told him to do.) The blind staff thought being blind gave them more experience with which to teach the blind. Such problems, however, resolved themselves with the effectiveness of the Valley Forge mobility method.

After the two months detached service at Dibble, Warren returned to Valley Forge and was discharged from the military.

With World War II over, it had become quite evident that the Army was about to divest itself of all its programs for war blinded. A movement aimed at reforming the V.A., forcing that agency to face up to its responsibilities, brought President Harry Truman to replace General Frank T. Hines from the World War I era with General Omar Bradley, and appointing Major General Paul Hawley as Chief Medical Director of the V.A. The same top-flight military specialists were also to serve in the V.A.; so, for the next several years, Doctors James Greear, Derrick Vail, and Elliot Randolph served as consultants. Warren felt that, without their support, Orientation & Mobility would never have found a place to take root when the Army program was discontinued. These men became God's gift to Warren who helped realize the V.A. Blind Rehabilitation program as he was later appointed to help establish it in 1947 by General Omar Bradley.

The year 1946, at the request of Donald Covalt and with full backing of General Hawley, found Warren researching aging blinded veterans of earlier wars on how they could be brought into service programs with up-to-date theory and practice. After six weeks and 337 interviews at nine centers, he was more convinced than ever and determined to establish a systematic method of Orientation & Mobility at each of the centers, plus a new training program at some hospital

separate from them, to serve the newly blinded men when Army and Navy programs were closed. This new program became the genesis of the Hines Blind Center.

Father "Tom" Carroll was on the Advisory Committee for Blinded Veterans chaired by R.B. Irwin. Father "Tom" and Miss Gruber had drafted a 21-page report which the Committee submitted to General Bradley's office, receipt of which was acknowledged, but no action taken. Meanwhile, the old guard of the V.A., holdovers from General Hines administration, were making arrangements with civilian institutions to handle the blinded veterans. Warren then learned that the report had been buried in a stack of reports and later, through a reliable source, that it was dead.

A month earlier, Warren had been hired by the American Foundation for the Blind to edit their publication, *Outlook for the Blind,* and also perform other functions. His career as an editor was short-lived, because he became totally engaged in a battle with certain elements within the V.A. system who were attempting to kill all coordinated efforts toward V.A. blind rehabilitation. He borrowed Dr. Covalt's copy of the Advisory Committee Report and went directly to General Hawley's Office, whereupon the secretary took it to Hawley and returned to inform Warren that the General would read it that evening and see him in the morning. True as gold, General Hawley did indeed read the report and understood what was happening.

Holdovers from General Hines administration, with attitudes derived from World War I era and their experiences in services for the war blinded, rigorously opposed any V.A. blind rehabilitation program for veterans. They were out of touch with the times. Simultaneously, opposition from private and public sectors of the blindness field was just as fierce, for they vied to get "a piece of the pie" from the Federal government for rehabilitating war blinded.

At about the same time, the philosophical objections were such that Dr. Robert Irwin of the American Foundation for the Blind would have integrated the blind with the sighted, and therefore mistrusted any efforts which might evolve into a home or asylum. Kathern Gruber convinced Irwin that their program was not intended to be a home or asylum. Irwin, although skeptical about the V.A. center, ultimately supported this concept and gave Warren a leave of absence to carry on his battle.

Another conflict began to surface. Father "Tom", who was steeped in Avon philosophy, wanted the Center to be a continuation of Avon, and was in direct

conflict over the emphasis Bledsoe and Hoover placed on Orientation & Mobility.

However, when Father Carroll saw the effects of Hoover's work on the whole human being, he became a supporter, although at times a wayward one, but he became one of the indispensable influences to keep the program alive once Hines Blind Center was established.

The skirmishes were many with more yet to come — but Warren's bulldog tenacity and perseverance clung long enough for some changes to begin taking place. On May 31, 1947, rehabilitation was transferred from the Army to the V.A.

However, time was of the essence because Generals Bradley and Hawley had only agreed to give the V.A. two years of service, and both were due to retire December 31, 1947. Consequently, Warren was more than ever eager to get a blind rehabilitation program started before the snow began to fly, in his actual words, "before the snow flies".

Warren was indeed the little David of Biblical times, slaying his Goliath. Much of his extensive efforts were countered by opposition from the old guard through their own powers: H. V. Stirling of the V.A.'s Vocational Rehabilitation, plus the private and public sectors who were "licking their chops" to get the blinded veterans into their own programs.

When General Omar Bradley, Administrator of the V.A., was deciding who should be the coordinator of the blinded veterans affairs, Father "Tom" Carroll did not recommend Bledsoe as was later revealed to Bledsoe by Father Carroll. Father Carroll told Bradley that Bledsoe should not be in charge because he was not aggressive enough. Unwittingly, Father Carroll's attempted disfavor turned Bradley's decision into Bledsoe's favor. It was prompted by Bradley's recollection of his own bitter experience when he was rebuked by General George Patton to the Commander-In-Chief of ETO, General Dwight Eisenhower, that Bradley was not aggressive enough.

By September of 1947, General Bradley had asked General Hawley to straighten out the blind programs. General Hawley called upon the appointee Bledsoe to accept the position of Special Coordinator for Blinded Veterans Affairs to which he was sworn in on the 15th day of the same month, and he was given a place in the Department of Medicine and Surgery to avert skirmishes with the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, in the person of H. V. Stirling.

Warren was given an authority which he had never enjoyed in the past. Yet, this authority stood on shaky ground, for there was constant bickering by

Vocational Rehabilitation to eliminate Warren's responsibility from the authority to establish the blind program contained in his job description and suggested that his grade and salary be cut in half.

Fully cognizant of H. V. Stirling's tactics, Warren exercised his authority by doing as much as he could to get the Hines Center going. He went to Hines, the site General Hawley had selected for the blind program, and started to get a building in readiness, equipment in the process of procurement, and suitable personnel. Because Warren was in an administrative limbo, support and cooperation did not come easily.

December had arrived. Warren became anxious as to the future of the blind program once Generals Bradley and Hawley retired at the end of the year. He, therefore, wrote a memorandum to General Hawley expressing his anxiety and explaining the trend of circumstances and what might happen upon their retirement — which spurred General Hawley to stay on six months longer as a Special Assistant to the new administrator. General Hawley asked Warren to remain in the Department of Medicine and Surgery to assist him in getting the Center going. General Hawley issued the memorandum to the Director of Medicine and Surgery concerning the reassignment of Warren Bledsoe to now come under the direct command of General Hawley.

General Paul Hawley read, amended, and approved the job description Bledsoe had written for the chief of the Center. Hawley did not object to Warren's principle that the chief must be a blind person and a veteran.

Because the physicians in the V.A. were so steeped in the principle that the patient must not treat himself, Warren sought to precondition them. His aim, however, was aided by Dr. Derrick Vail who had become the Chief Consulting Ophthalmologist to the V.A. When Vail was in England during World War II visiting at St. Dunstans, an institution for the blind, he accepted the concept of a blind chief.

The selection of Russ Williams was determined long before Hawley ordered Bledsoe to get the ball rolling at Hines. Warren had plans for Russ as a chief perhaps even as early as 1946, before the Army divested itself of Valley Forge Army Hospital. In Warren's mind, Russ would fit into his plans in organizing the V.A. Blind Rehabilitation program should he have a part in establishing one, which he was ultimately given the opportunity to do.

WILLIAMS WAS THE FIRST GUARDIAN OF BLEDSOE'S TORCH

Russell C. Williams came to Valley Forge in October of 1944, and in May, 1945 went to Avon for his rehabilitation training.

While completing his courses at Avon, he attracted the attention of the staff ophthalmologists and rehabilitation personnel, who were impressed with him as an influence on other blinded soldiers. After completion at Avon, a number of people were interested in his career of which Kathern Gruber was one.

Colonel Elliot Randolph at Valley Forge and Lt. Richard Hoover of the Valley Forge Army Medical program persuaded Russ to come back to Valley Forge as a counselor of the blinded soldiers. They recognized Russ's greatest skill was in his ability to relate with all sorts and conditions of blinded people.

Furthermore, Warren became even more convinced that Russ was his choice in his plans to organize the first V.A. Blind Rehabilitation program.

After returning from Avon, Russ revealed that the Long Cane system was a better way to travel. He became the chief exponent of that particular mode when Bledsoe and Hoover needed that kind of impetus in a leader.

Russ's personality and temperament reminded Warren of his father, John Francis Bledsoe. Warren discerned that Russ had the ability to get people to do things he wanted them to do without overt coercion just like his father. In the manner Russ conducted himself as a leader he commanded respect from those he needed to carry out his ideas and philosophy of blind rehabilitation.

Although Warren was certain of Russ as his choice, as a formal procedure, he solicited from the staff at Valley Forge recommendations for candidates to be chief of the Blind Center at Hines. Out of five candidates, Russ was regarded the best choice by Lt. Richard Hoover, Louisa Walker, and Ilah Oja (later Ilah Wilde), all of whom are now deceased. Thus, the hiring of Russ Williams was settled in the Fall of 1947, and he reported to Hines for his position as chief on February 20, 1948.

LAST RESORT TO STOP BLEDSOE

Bledsoe made good use of the unusual authority General Hawley had secured for him and Russ. Everyone stood back to give Bledsoe room in which to work. His opponents patiently waited for Bledsoe to meet with colossal failure, which never occurred. As a last resort, his opponents in the V.A.'s Solicitor's Office attempted to block the release of the technical bulletin announcing the opening of the Center but that also failed. Bledsoe and Williams left this problem to be dealt

with by Dr. Kelso Carroll, manager of Hines V.A. Hospital, and General Hawley, who got the technical bulletin released. This minor delay however, turned out in favor of Bledsoe and Russ because it gave them more time to recruit and train their personnel.

CONSULTANTS TO THE BLIND PROGRAM

Bledsoe and Williams virtually had all the freedom as to how the blind program was to be set up. Fledglings though they may have been as architects of blind programs they were fully cognizant that their efforts had to be discreet, forthright, and sound, otherwise they would suffer the failure their opponents were hoping for. While Bledsoe and Williams had a free hand, the only ones that were looking over their shoulders were the consultants Hawley appointed — Kathern F. Gruber, Richard E. Hoover, and Harry Spar. These consultants at times took an active part in helping set up the blind program.

Kathern F. Gruber, popularly known as "Kay", came with vast experience in work for the blind. Her dedication and credentials were impeccable. As a consultant, Gruber fought tooth and nail for Williams whenever he needed equipment for the program. She remembered well the early days of the Blind Center when she said, "There was hardly a stick or stone when we came to Hines in 1948."

When Williams needed a station wagon to transport blind students outside the hospital premises for mobility training, Miss Gruber went to Washington to procure a station wagon. She would tell the V.A. officials the Blind Center could be run efficiently for a number of years for the cost of a bomber and while they were mulling that over, she would ask for a station wagon for the Blind Center. The V.A. approved the request for a station wagon — it was cheaper than a bomber. Once it was approved, Gruber lost no time making an exit. As she was leaving one of the V.A. officials sternly said, "Young lady, don't you come back asking for another station wagon." She had accomplished her goal and thus did not respond, but thoughts quietly ran through her mind, "If we need something else, I'll be back. This is not the last time you'll be seeing me."

Richard E. Hoover was appointed as consultant somewhat later. Bledsoe had wanted Hoover to be directly associated with Orientation & Mobility at the Blind Center but it was too late. Before leaving Valley Forge, encouraged by Colonel Randolph, Hoover decided to study medicine and resisted all enticement to be directly involved in O&M. Losing him to medicine was not a loss, because as an

ophthalmologist he could interpret the needs of the blind to his fellow physicians with first-hand knowledge. While at medical school Hoover was in residence at the Maryland School for the Blind. It was at this time he introduced the lightweight Long Cane travel to the students there.

Harry Spar of the Industrial Home for the Blind in Brooklyn, New York, was appointed as consultant on manual training.

RECRUITING OF PERSONNEL

With World War II over, the men who worked under Bledsoe and Hoover at Valley Forge Army Hospital went on with their lives as civilians and could not be reached. Also, with the passage of time since leaving Maryland School for the Blind, more than six years prior, Warren had lost contact with those who taught there with the exception of Alvin Stafford Chiles, popularly known as "Charlie". In Bledsoe's plan, Charlie was vital in setting up the manual crafts and wood shops. But enticing Charlie to come to Hines was not easy. He had accrued 19 years toward retirement benefits at the Maryland School and did not want to jeopardize his retirement benefits by accepting a new position at a center which was not yet started. Superintendent Francis Andrews assured Charlie his position at the Maryland School would be intact should he decide to return within a year. Charlie decided to make that move and reported for duty at Hines on March 1, 1948.

Dr. Adolf Meyer, Psycho-Biologist at Johns Hopkins, made a timely disclosure that the Corrective therapists at Hines Hospital were a blue ribbon group, their nucleus having been formed by an elite group trained in the Army during World War II in the 826th Medical Rehabilitation Center in Stoneleigh, England, under Colonel Frank Stinchfield. These therapists all were soldiers wounded in combat, reconditioned for combat and then selected to remain at the Center conditioning other wounded soldiers.

These men were under the leadership of General Paul Hawley who was in charge of medicine in ETO (European Theater of Operation) and a staunch advocate of medical rehabilitation. (After the war, Hawley became Bledsoe's immediate boss in setting up the V.A. Blind Rehabilitation program.)

Colonel Rex Diveley was the head of Orthopedics in the ETO. His office was at medical forces at the headquarters for the Army in Cheltenham, England. His job was mostly administrative.

Colonel Diveley and Frank Stinchfield, who was a subordinate, later acquired

equal rating as Diveley, started the administrative set-up of the Medical Rehabilitation program.

Dr. Frank Stinchfield

However, it was Colonel Stinchfield who was put in charge in setting up the 826th Medical Rehabilitation Center and be in full command of that operation in Stoneleigh, England. Lt. Colonel Marcus Stewart was Stinchfield's first assistant. Captain Rolly Schwartz worked directly under Stinchfield's command as the school's commandant at the 826th Center training the men to become therapists. Stinchfield produced a blue ribbon group of men from his work at that Center, who could be ideally retrained as Orientation & Mobility instructors for the blind. Unknowingly, Stinchfield had a hand in the work for the blinded veterans.

Bledsoe heard of the legendary Colonel Frank E. Stinchfield but had not met him in the course of his work in establishing the Blind Center. Yet, indeed, it was Bledsoe who attributed the highly trained therapists to Stinchfield and was the first to make mention of it in his writings. Furthermore, Bledsoe remarked that the men trained by Carl Purcell — who was a Stinchfield man — were far superior to those who were at Valley Forge Army Hospital training the blinded soldiers.

The men who trained in Stoneleigh and were hired as Corrective therapists at Hines were: Carl Purcell, Walter G. Olenek, Rich Russo, Edward P. Mees, Wally Posiack, Carl Schwartz (Rolly's cousin), and Joe Myza. Of these, Joe Myza and Carl Schwartz remained in CT. There were many more from the 826th Medical Center but they were hired in the 14 V.A. hospitals throughout the Midwest, most of whom were recruited into the V.A. by Rolly Schwartz when he became the Executive Director of Medical Rehabilitation at the Chicago V.A. Regional Office in 1946, appointed by General Paul Hawley.

With the blessing of Dr. Louis B. Newman, Director of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Hines, Russell Williams approached Carl Purcell, Chief of Corrective Therapy for the selection of Orientation & Mobility instructors from the CT staff. Purcell cooperated fully and professionally, helping Williams to tap his resources.

Bledsoe, Williams, Gruber, and Chiles interviewed 12 men and five were hired. The first five that were hired in the Spring of 1946 were: Joe Romanko, Alford DeWitt Corbett, Stan Suterko, Edward "Bud" Thuis, and Edward P. Mees.

NO CARBON COPY HERE — THEY WERE ORIGINAL HBC STAFF HIRED IN 1948. First row: Alvin S. Chiles, Russell C. Williams, Dr. Louis B. Newman — Chief of Physical Medicine, Edward P. Mees, and Joe Romanko. Second row: Edward "Bud" Thuis, Loretta Goergen, Alford "Dee" Corbett, and Stan Suterko.

Joe Romanko resigned after several months and was replaced by Lawrence E. Blaha in January 1949. On September 1, 1949, John Malamazian transferred from CT to the Blind Center through the urging of a childhood and neighborhood friend, Stan Suterko. Suterko became the first O&M supervisor. Therefore, for the next several years, these six men were the pioneers to teach the first classes in Orientation & Mobility to blinded veterans as well as to future instructors in O&M. At the beginning, however, it was Bledsoe who taught these pioneers the lightweight Long Cane technique. As they learned among themselves, they began to experiment and teach one another to do it better, thus refining the original technique.

V.A. Consultant, Richard E. Hoover, father of O&M, who was then a medical student, visited Hines several days a month to oversee the progress of the blind program. At times he took an active part in teaching the instructors.

Before the Blind Center officially opened, Chief Russ Williams was without a secretary. Bledsoe went to personnel and told them he would be his secretary until they found one. By noon of that same day, Loretta Goergen was hired.

Genevieve Miller, who later became Assistant Chief, was hired in October, 1948.

Just when the effect of World War II on soldiers who became blinded in combat were rehabilitated, another emergency arose as the result of the Korean War in 1950. The influx of blinded soldiers returning home from that war created the need for the Blind Center to be engaged in a massive hiring of personnel as well as expansion of the Center from a 9- to a 30-bed facility occupying Buildings 146, 147, 148, and 149.

On February 18, 1951, the first five hired during this massive hiring were: Lee Farmer, Rich Russo, Richard "Bugs" Bugielski, Edward W. Polfus, and Franklin D. Wood. There was another person hired on this same date but he was personally selected by Chief Russ Williams from the applications filed at the Personnel Office; he was Donald Blasch, Psychologist.

The ensuing O&M staff members hired were: Peter Gotfryd, A. James Enzinna, Cecil Miller, Ray Brooks, Oscar Olivia, Norman F. Roche, Jack Henschen, Walter Olenek, Evert A. Bjork, and Lloyd Widerberg.

Later in the '50s, three more Mobility instructors were hired to replace those who resigned. They were: Berdell "Pete" Wurzburger in 1953, James J. Lassen in 1956, and Robert "Bob" Gockman in 1958.

Peter Gotfryd, Jack Henschen, Norman Roche, Oscar Olivia, and Cecil Miller resigned or transferred from the Blind Center. Some of the resignations were prompted by talk of "pink slips" that were to be issued.

Henschen left to sell insurance; Roche moved to New Mexico to assume a position in CT; Olivia transferred to Housekeeping; and Miller returned to public school teaching.

The non-Mobility therapists hired in 1951 were: John Thompson, Leo Christoff, John Hoiden, Mary Wyrick, Robert Ryan, Zola Bond, Ellen Van Vleit, Madelon Hawkins, Shirley Porter, and Richard Brown.

Bledsoe and Williams, along with the staff, cast the die for the Blind Center with emphasis on the revoluntionary Orientation & Mobility, making lasting influential contributions henceforth. Bill McCloskey, formerly of Hines, now an O&M supervisor at the Southeastern Blind Rehabilitation Center, attests to the fact that the principles and training of the Hines Blind Center philosophy still persist.

Two daring young men challenging the world

Same men conquered the impossible dream and the unbeatable foe, now appearing distinguished, and respected.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BLIND REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Hines Blind Center was finally established and functioning, but underpinnings had yet to be braced permanently. Bledsoe, appointed as Coordinator of Blinded Veterans Affairs by V.A. Administrator, General Omar Bradley, resigned precisely a year later on September 15, 1948, based on the terms of agreement. All the while, however, Warren kept insisting that there should be a permanent position created in the V.A. Central Office whose job would be in the interest of the blind. He submitted that as a recommendation along with his resignation and specified that the position be filled by a blinded person.

Obviously, in the meantime, there was yet the need for a man like Bledsoe and therefore he was retained as V.A. Consultant on a part-time basis. But when the Korean War broke out he became a full-time consultant.

Bledsoe did not intend for the Blind Center to be a "fly-by-night" institution — here one day and gone tomorrow. He wanted the Center to be a permanent

program even after the guns were silenced. It was my belief that Warren had a long-range plan when he accepted the task of establishing the Blind Center. It is also my belief that he was concerned about the aging veterans who would become blind with progressing years.

The Central Office saw merit in Warren's recommendations and in 1952 asked him if he would accept a position as the first Chief of Blind Rehabilitation Services, which he did.

The bracing of the underpinnings of the blind program had just begun and already it was on shaky ground, in spite of the fact that by this time the blind program at Hines was the Cadillac of the blindness industry. The influence of Hines Blind Center's teaching made an impact on the blind rehabilitation movement to improve blind services. About a decade later, that discipline was included in the curriculum at Boston College, Western Michigan University and, subsequently, other colleges and universities. A decade before, the impact of its teaching was infectiously spreading into the civilian programs as well as throughout the world.

Even while in its most fruitful years, there was a conflict to be resolved. The military hospitals had their own ideas as to what to do with the blinded soldiers returning from Korea. The problem lay in the question of who should assume the responsibility of caring for these newly blinded servicemen and servicewomen. A meeting of medical representatives of all branches of the service was held at Hines. After some deliberation — governed by the influence of Dr. Derrick Vail, Chief Consultant in Ophthalmology, whose participation was sought by Bledsoe and Russ Williams, in addition to the support of the Blinded Veterans Association — the Department of Defense and Veterans Administration agreed that the best interests of the patients would be served by a unified and consolidated program as it was originally intended in the Veterans Administration.

Consequently, in September 1950, Williams, Bledsoe and Miss Kathern Gruber met V.A. officials in Washington, D.C., to present plans to expand the Hines program from a 9-bed unit to three units of 9 beds and a preliminary unit of 13 beds in the Ophthalmology Ward (B-1 North).

The wisdom of Bledsoe recommending Kathern Gruber for the V.A. Consultant's position and Russ Williams for the position of Chief of the Blind Center ensured that the program stayed, persisted, had its identity, and didn't get swallowed up in the medical scene at Hines. Donald Blasch can attest to this, since he, too, had undergone similar experiences when he became Chief when Russ left

Hines in May 1959.

When the war was over and activities at the Blind Center were winding down, the Blind Center's personnel anticipated receiving "pink slips". Simultaneously, Warren, who had been known to "step on toes" for the welfare of blinded veterans, had now stepped on some big toes at the Central Office. Therefore, by 1958 Warren was in deep trouble, with his position in jeopardy. He was virtually pushed out of the V.A. He went from the V.A. to HEW (Health, Education & Welfare) but not without resistance. The position he held in the V.A. as Chief of Blind Rehabilitation Services was being abolished and he fought to restore that position. Bledsoe insisted very strongly to Administrator Sumner Whittier, the Director of Medicine and Surgery, along with a letter to President Dwight D. Eisenhower, that it was unsatisfactory to run the blind program without a person in Central Office representing the interests of the blind. By this time, however, Warren was at HEW and would not be around to pressure Mr. Whittier, but his friends would carry on the battle for him. Kathern Gruber, Father "Tom" Carroll, Dr. Richard Hoover, and the BVA applied relentless pressure that Whittier had never known — plus the urging from the White House.

Mr. Whittier finally gave in and turned to Bledsoe, asking him who should fill that position. Warren said, "Russ Williams should be the one because he is the most qualified." Whittier retorted, "Wouldn't that be a sacrifice to the Blind Center?" But apparently, after having met Russ at the Blind Center on the Saturday before Labor Day in 1958, he was convinced that Russ was the man for that position which was almost abolished when Bledsoe left the V.A.

Preparations ensued but not without months of "foot dragging". Once the position was confirmed, however, Russ went to Washington to learn his new, broader policy-making position on a part-time basis and returned to Hines to assume his position as Chief. This continued for months until finally, in May 1959, he became the Chief of Blind Rehabilitation Services on a full-time basis.

Whittier visited Hines on September 6, 1958, a Labor Day weekend, to determine if the Hines program could handle the demand for the entire nation. Russ replied, "Yes, it can handle the demand as it currently exists," adding, "but it cannot handle the need, if that need were ever translated into demand. It could overwhelm a program as small as ours."

Since Whittier was to be in Chicago for a Veterans organization convention, it was expected that he would drop in on Hines. Thus, those in charge of programs

at Hines were asked to stand by on Saturday, their usual day off. While Russ was busily typing and waiting for Whittier, he soon noticed that his doorway was crowded with an entourage of official visitors. The manager of Hines Hospital, Bill McCoy, introduced Russ to Whittier. After some pleasant bantering, Russ took them on a tour of the Blind Center. They were quite impressed with the blind patients and Whittier became a believer in the Hines program as conducted by Russ. Russ had made a convert of Whittier.

All Whittier needed was to be proselytized, which Bledsoe, Gruber, Hoover, Father Carroll, and Russ Williams did; each had a part in getting him to accept Bledsoe's demands for restoration of the Blind Rehabilitation Services at the Central Office in Washington, D.C. At a later date, Mr. Whittier admitted that the best thing he ever did was restore the Service with Russ at the helm. This was further substantiated when Sumner Whittier recognized Russ Williams in a group from Central Office who visited his office to get acquainted or reacquainted, and Whittier made Hines program and its work the subject of most of his remarks.

When Bledsoe was with the V.A., the Department of Medicine and Surgery was virtually stewing him in the pot, but now, it was brought to a simmer and into a more welcoming environment, the HEW.

When Bledsoe started in the V.A. in 1947, he worked for a futuristic Director of Medicine and Surgery, but ten years later all of this had changed. Therefore, when Warren went to HEW in 1958, it felt to him like he was moving into an entirely different world, one in which the concern for the blind and disabled was truly genuine. The grants Mary Elizabeth Switzer helped push for colleges and universities to include Orientation & Mobility in their agenda were begun as a result of groundwork from Bledsoe's work while still with the V.A. Mary Switzer had been observing the program at Hines Blind Center for several years and was favorably influenced by how it was being conducted by Russell C. Williams, and the fact that there was no such counterpart in existence. She should be credited for merging the efforts of the HEW Services for the blind, headed by Louis Rives, and the V.A.'s Blind Rehabilitation Services, headed by Russell C. Williams.

What caught the eyes and attention of Switzer, as it did of the whole world, was the success Hines had with the highly unique development of an innovative technique of teaching the lightweight Long Cane travel to the newly blinded soldiers, but more importantly teaching sighted instructors to teach the blind mobility.

Bledsoe's move from the V.A. to HEW was timely, or perhaps an act of Providence, for he met Switzer in 1958 or thereabouts and she was fully prepared to welcome him. The opening of that door was aided by Kathern Gruber and Father "Tom" Carroll. Switzer was receptive to what Warren had to say about the Blind Rehabilitation program, and the possibility of Orientation & Mobility as a curriculum in colleges and universities. Bledsoe had the good fortune of having such a dynamic leader in HEW as Mary Elizabeth Switzer, for her prestige at the hearings in Congress and skills in extracting money from the legislators for the benefit of the physically handicapped were unique.

Although I believe Bledsoe was in great part responsible, he credits the skillful diplomacy of Louis Rives and H.A. Wood with the endorsement of Orientation & Mobility which was given approval by the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind.

GRANTS FOR O&M TRAINING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Now that the grants had been approved for colleges and universities in 1960 to institute Orientation & Mobility in their curriculum, George G. Mallinson, Dean of the Graduate School of Western Michigan University, was in search of mentors. Mallison heard of Hines and the most qualified person was Donald Blasch, a perfect mentor of few words but very forceful in getting his points across. Blasch was Russ Williams' right arm when Russ was at Hines. Russ Williams saw that in order for Bledsoe's O&M to find a firmer root for generations to come there was a need to prompt Blasch to accept the position at Western Michigan University to which he was indifferent. However, it was not easy enticing Blasch to leave Hines where he was pleased with this position. From words of friendly advice and then to threats, Williams got Blasch changing his mind very shortly. Although Blasch wished Williams was joking with his threat, he never knew how persistent Williams could be. For a whole week Russ would call Blasch at 2:00 A.M. every day. Blasch buried his head in the pillow to ignore the ringing of the phone. But now, the telephone was annoying Mrs. Blasch because the incessant ringing was not responded to by Don. Mrs. Blasch finally convinced Don to accept the position at WMU to end the relentless phone calls.

Therefore, by July 1961, Don was at WMU, the greatest thing that ever happened in the field of O&M. A month later, Stan Suterko joined Blasch which was the condition under which Blasch would accept the position at WMU. Larry Blaha

resigned at Hines to obtain a degree at Roosevelt University to qualify himself for a position at WMU, and by January 1962 he had joined Blasch and Suterko.

Blasch also had plans for John Malamazian at WMU but trend of events averted Malamazian from making that move. The then Chief of Hines Blind Center, Loyal E. Apple, left Hines to become chief at the newly established Western Blind Rehabilitation Center in Palo Alto, California. Malamazian became the chief at Hines in January 1967. Several years before that time, however, Larry Blaha accepted a position at California State at Los Angeles in 1964. During that same period, Lloyd Widerberg, also for Hines, replaced Blaha at WMU. (The position Blaha accepted in Los Angeles was originally offered to Stan Suterko, but because there was a death in the family he felt the familial responsibilities to remain in the Midwest to be near his parents.)

After caving in to Williams' relentless pressure, Donald Blasch became an indispensable mentor in the field of O&M at Western Michigan University. He was the essential element in spreading the gospel of O&M, the diffusion of which in actuality began at Hines Blind Center during the nascent stage of its development. Once the incessant concentric circle of waves was started, Bledsoe saw to it that they would not stop what was achieved through Switzer and Rives at HEW.

Bledsoe, like the proverbial tortoise who kept plugging along and never stopping to rest, dismantled misconceptions and prejudices against the blind program as it was progressing at Hines, with the emphasis placed on the lightweight Long Cane as a travel aid. As a son of an educator, he educated everyone along the way.

EQUIVALENCE OF CULTURE

C. Warren Bledsoe in actuality created a culture out of blind rehabilitation — a culture in the form of environs for the blind, consisting of orientation and mobility training, as well as developing new living skills. Culture may be regarded as that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, philosophy, discipline, and any other capabilities or habits acquired by the blind as a member of the blindness community. Thus, in essence, "culture" is traits and characteristics; although assumed and adopted, it is acquired through the tedious process of learning.

Bledsoe's culture is a continuity which is gradually changing, changing equally with progress and time. As an illustration, the lightweight Long Cane as a travel aid, born at Valley Forge Army Hospital by Hoover and Bledsoe, became

richly refined at Hines Blind Center and is still being refined at the four existing blind rehabilitation centers. Yet, there are the electronic travel aids making their dawning in O&M today.

The ballast to Bledsoe's culture is the lightweight Long Cane as a travel aid, because of its merits and because it persists. Furthermore, it is a sound ballast, since in its persistence it is refined, thus promoting continuity.

Usually, it is profitable for a culture to possess a degree of ballast in terms of consistency and continuity. Those which have fallen markedly short in these qualities soon disintegrated and perished — which is why they are so inconspicuous in the history of O&M. Evidence of this is the "foot travel" as it had been carried out at Avon "Old Farms" in Connecticut and Dibble Army Hospital in Menlo, California — mobility without the use of a cane.

In maintaining real continuity, a culture must put genuine value on what each generation of O&M specialists hand down to the newer generation by way of Orientation & Mobility training. A sound culture is receptive to its own valuable past or at least acquiescent to it in shaping its future. There is also the receptivity to cultural development worked out by other cultures. Such acceptance of foreign development exists from not only one blind program to another but also geographically, and the term most applicable here is "diffusion".

The process of diffusion takes place when something new has been evolved by a culture; whether an idea, theory, or discipline, there is a tendency for it to be passed on to other societies. For example, while Hines Blind Center accepted the craft and shop programs developed at Maryland School for the Blind through the hiring of "Charlie" Chiles, so have the adversarial civilian blind programs which so vehemently opposed establishment of V.A. Blind Rehabilitation programs, paradoxically became beneficiaries of Bledsoe's culture. On the other hand, the contagion that involves passing the new to its own evolving culture is known as "tradition" and not diffusion.

Hines, therefore, was the "Cultural Area" for orientation and mobility, an area so rich with innovative techniques in teaching the lightweight Long Cane as travel aid. As a matter of fact, as early as the '50s, demands were made for Hines Blind Center's O&M Specialists to teach the "gospel" of this technique in private and public sectors of O&M programs, as well as geographically, nationally and internationally.

Bledsoe's contributions to the field of blindness can be equated as culture

by virtue of its definition. In addition, Bledsoe's culture endured the test of time and is worthy of being recognized as such.

Today, Warren serves on the Board of Directors at the Maryland School for the Blind and continues to be involved in work with the blindness community.

The O&M Division 9 of A.E.R. is blessed with the presence of Warren, who is a battling philosopher and historian. When a mandate to establish an O&M archives was issued at the A.E.R.'s 1984 Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, he started to organize them at a location at the Maryland School for the Blind, provided for by Superintendent Rick Welsh of that school. Four years later, after many weeks, months, years of hard work by Warren Bledsoe and his right arm, Mrs. Louise Parson, with financial help from the BVA, the archives of the Orientation & Mobility movement have finally been assembled for preservation and will be available to scholars and interested public. Sunday, June 19, 1988, at 2:00 p.m., there was a ribbon-cutting ceremony in Morrison Hall on the campus of the Maryland School for the Blind.

Last, but not least, Mr. Bledsoe, whose time was consumed in establishing the first V.A. Blind Rehabilitation program and keeping it functioning, found enough time to court and wed Anne Wunderle. Thus, at the youthful age of 40 Warren and Anne were wed on Saturday, September 20, 1952. They were blessed with two daughters: Hester Anne and Virginia. Hester Anne is now Mrs. Butterfield and she and her husband are blessed with a daughter Elizabeth now one year and five months old. Therefore, Warren is a jolly old grandpa during his free moments. The CBRC staff and the Torch wish warmth to continue to prevail in the Bledsoe's household as Warren experienced when he was a child living on the premises of the Maryland School for the Blind when his father was the Superintendent.

CONCLUSION

Thus, we conclude our salute to Charles Warren Bledsoe, who so nobly accepted the monumental responsibility of establishing the first V.A. Blind Rehabilitation program after he had been appointed as Coordinator of Blinded Veterans Affairs by V.A. Administrator General Omar Bradley. It now seems almost providential that God had picked Warren for this job. As a dynamic and visionary progeny of the Superintendent of the Maryland School for the Blind, he was well equipped to be the brilliant architect that was to build a blind rehabilitation program.

The war blinded were very fortunate; they had an opportunity for a rehabilitation program due to Bledsoe's efforts. However, those most fortunate are the non-service connected blinded veterans and the aging veterans becoming blind later in life, because the blind program has been kept alive and active all these years due to the efforts spearheaded by Bledsoe and supported by Kathern Gruber, Dr. Richard Hoover, Father "Tom" Carroll, Russ Williams, along with BVA.

How true Russ Williams spoke when he said, "Had Warren not been around during and after World War II, affairs for the blind might have been quite different". Let us hope Warren and his efforts will not fade from mortal memory as the years relentlessly advance. We as blinded veterans and those in the field of O&M, as well as the blindness community, owe a great debt of gratitude to Mr. Bledsoe. May we also hope that the ideals and theories of Dr. Richard E. Hoover, Kathern Gruber, and Russ Williams, stressed so courageously, will persist.

Because there was a Hines Blind Center, the ideals and theories of these pioneers, the provident planners, had an environment in which to practice. It also gave Russ Williams — who could have succeeded, no matter what career or where — a magnificent opportunity to prove his intrinsic worth as a masterful leader in modern blind rehabilitation. Bledsoe had the wisdom to choose Russ as the first chief of the Blind Center which was in the making, met him when Russ had only been blinded several months — much like the early state of an uncut diamond, evolving into a priceless gem.

The remarkable success and accomplishments Bledsoe had in establishing the first V.A. Blind Rehabilitation program, in spite of the fact that certain elements within the V.A. wanted Bledsoe to meet with colossal failure (but he did not), was due to Bledsoe's philosophy. Indeed, he was triumphant in helping General Paul Hawley's objective succeed because it didn't matter to Bledsoe who got the credit as long as the goals were accomplished.

It was truly Bledsoe who put it all together and lit the pathways of the blind through the Blind Rehabilitation's eternal Torch enkindled by his hopes and dreams.

This symbolic Torch glowed brighter in the hands of each chief as they strived to contribute, and their contributions made Hines Blind Center the model in blind rehabilitation technique from which blind institutions the world over have benefitted. We are confident that the Torch will glow even brighter in the hands of all those yet to follow, since CBRC, the WBRC, EBRC, SEBRC, and a number of clinics are now in existence in the V.A. system. For the blood, sweat and toil that

made blind rehabilitation what it is today we cannot allow this Torch to be snuffed out. There will always be a definite and a continuing need for progressive Blind Rehabilitation programs suited to their times, bearing in mind never to relinquish quality services and remembering to hire the best professionally trained personnel.

The symbolic Torch Bledsoe enkindled during World War II is the reason for the CBRC Torch publication.

Finally, a long overdue salute to you, Mr. Charles Warren Bledsoe — may your Torch glow eternally.

• • •

C. Warren Bledsoe's CREDO is a statement of principles and firm beliefs, a confession of faith in the profession of Orientation & Mobility. His creed demonstrates his conviction. The CREDO reads thusly:

Credo Ascribed to Certain Masters of the Art of Teaching Blind People

I hold the art of teaching blind people how to perform without sight among the highest callings which a human being may answer with his life. If at any time, through my own infirmity, or to fill a power vacuum, the day comes when I must become a mere executive, supervisor or administrator, I will remember that, no matter how it seems to the worldly, the true apex of work for the blind is personal service in direct contact with blind people, and that all organized work for the blind has no other end but this, as fully and well-performed as available knowledge permits.

During the years when it is my privilege to practice the art, I will do my uttermost, not only to extend my own effectiveness, and the effectiveness of others, but also to devise ways of imparting efficiency with all the tact and kindness of which I am capable, bearing in mind that the most cherished attribute a person has is his self-esteem, based on a sense of worth, the quintessence of which is independence.

I will keep in mind that a severe handicap, particularly in its early stages or if it goes for a long time untended, requires that an

individual be a constant recipient of so much help that the burden recurrently seems intolerable, and that my actions and attitudes should never increase this burden by any kind of ostentation in my bearing toward my work or blind people. Without morbid self-effacement or subservience, I will avoid any form of encroachment upon the individuality of those I serve, especially subtle usurping of credit for their performance.

I will keep my emotions in such order that I will not seek exceptional satisfaction from relationships with those I help, and will steadily perform in such a way as to encourage them to rely on and be preoccupied with those persons it is most natural and desirable for them to know and to love.

To my working hours I will give the most complete attention of the most creative kind of which I am capable, dwelling constantly on every practicality which can render a human being without sight a person of value in his own eyes.

I will guard my tongue and my time, but give generously my knowledge and experience to others who are also devoted to this art which is my calling.

I will reserve my scorn for those who aspire to be my colleagues without true respect for the calling, who are cyncial toward all these things in which I believe, and without diligence and care in performing their duties. These I will relentelessly harry out of the field by open and aboveboard strictures and sanctions without any regard for influence which such persons may muster to counterattack.

I will not spoil blind people, or encourage them to become mere charming enslavers of those around them. I will look to the long view in helping them, not to ease of the moment. But I will stop short of making myself a compulsive taskmaster over the people whom I serve.

No matter how my battles go, once a conflict is resolved, I will put it behind me and rest and recondition my heart, mind, and body for further action.

Warren Bledsoe
July 27, 1966

C.B.R.C. TORCH

Building 13 (124)
V.A. Hines Hospital
Hines, Illinois 60141-9999

FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND
& PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED
POSTAL MANUAL PART 135

Central Blind Rehabilitation Center

40th Anniversary
1948-1988

C.B.R.C. TORCH

"Let it light the pathways of the blind, that their dignity may be restored."

HOLIDAY ISSUE 1995

APH "WINGS OF FREEDOM" AWARD GOES TO C. WARREN BLEDSOE

1995 HOLIDAY MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

On behalf of the staff of the Central Blind Rehabilitation Center and myself, we extend our best wishes for a merry and prosperous holiday season.

During this season, we traditionally take time not only for thanksgiving, but, also, reflection. Often, we review our behavior, principles, and where we are on our journey. Often, the holiday season is a good time to put things in proper perspective and establish goals for the forthcoming year. It is not difficult, in our mundane day to day existence, to temporarily lose track of basic principles that should govern the course of our action in all areas.

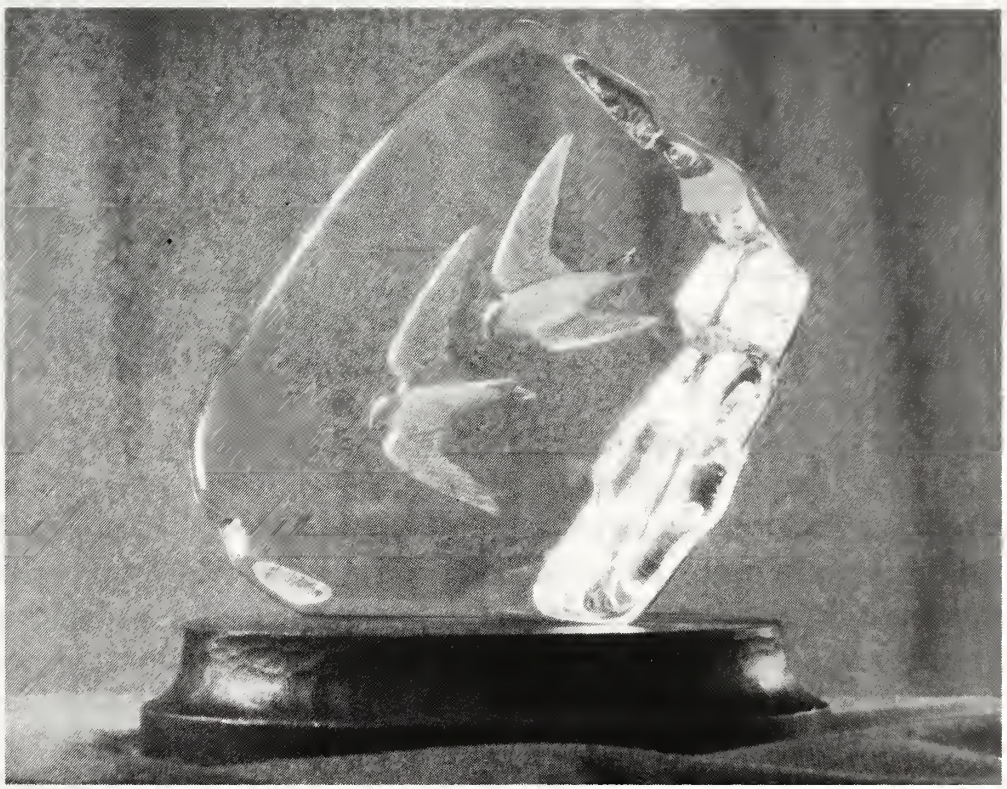
Not so long ago, I heard a wonderful statement that comes right to the core of a great number of issues. I wish to share with you this wonderful quote, "We are spiritual beings having a human experience". Quite a powerful and profound statement. For many, this is a sharp contrast to our current belief system, stating we are human beings trying, at times, to advance spiritually. Different point of reference, certainly worthy of reflection.

My very best wishes to all our readers this Holiday Season and throughout the New Year.

J. J. Whitehead
Chief, Central Blind Rehab Service
Hines VAMC

"WINGS OF FREEDOM" AWARD

On October 13, 1995, C. Warren Bledsoe was presented with the "APH Wings of Freedom Award". The American Printing House for the Blind honored Warren with this special recognition, an exceptional tribute for a truly extraordinary man. The "Wings of Freedom Award" was established to recognize individuals who had demonstrated exemplary leadership in the area of education and rehabilitation of visually impaired people. It is appropriately presented to exceptional stalwarts in the field of blindness. It is not necessarily awarded annually, as a matter of fact, it has been awarded only four times during its existence; to William English, John Siems, Fred Sinclair and on this most recent occasion was C. Warren Bledsoe. The "APH Wings of Freedom Award" is a tangible symbol of the mission of APH to "promote the independence of blind and visually impaired person by providing special media tools and materials needed for education and life". The award is in the form of an elegant lead crystal sculpture that depicts two martins, majestically soaring from a cliff. Unequivocally, Mr. Bledsoe is the embodiment of that noble goal.



"WINGS OF FREEDOM AWARD"
FIGUEIREDO OF LSB

Warren Bledsoe, is the son of John Francis Bledsoe, past Superintendent of the Maryland School for the Blind and an educator in the field of blindness. Warren is a philosophical extension of his father in his attitude, relationship and deep commitment of service to the blind. He is a visionary architect who was instrumental in

establishing a blind rehabilitation program for blinded veterans. His efforts encountered confrontations and objections, but he relentlessly and tenaciously persisted in pursuit of his ideals. Had it not been for Warren, there might not have been a VA Blind Rehabilitation Center.

(L to R) BLEDSOE & WARREN

Warren was born on the campus of Maryland School for the Blind on July 15, 1912. He was reared in an environment that placed great emphasis on education and constructive dynamism, a tradition passed down from one generation to the next.

He is a graduate of Princeton University. As a teacher at the Maryland School for the Blind, he taught English and coached drama students between 1934 and 1941. In 1938, Warren enrolled in the Harvard-Perkins course in education for the blind. (It was at this time, Richard Hoover was hired by MSB with whom Warren became well acquainted.)

During World War II, Warren enlisted in the Army Air Corps and was stationed at Craig Air Base in Alabama. He served in the public relations unit and was editor of the Craig Field Journal. About the time, that he was being considered for a transfer to the Yank Magazine, Colonel Elliott Randolph of the Surgeon General of the Army

staff ordered him to report the to Valley Forge Army Hospital where he was reunited with Richard Hoover. The transfer of Bledsoe and Hoover was necessitated by the surge in war eye casualties returning home in such great numbers that there was a massive need for experienced men to work with the blinded servicemen. Both Bledsoe and Hoover discussed and pondered over the possibilities of foot travel for the newly war blinded. They developed the long cane method of travel, teaching it to other instructors who, taught it to blinded servicemen.

When the war ended, the military divested itself of the rehabilitation program. Thus, in May, 1947, President Truman mandated that the VA develop and establish a Blind Center to accommodate the back log of the war blind. General Omar Bradley, the VA Administrator, appointed Warren as Coordinator of Blinded Veterans Affairs. Bledsoe had the foresight and wisdom to envisioned Russell Williams as the first Chief of the blind program, if a Blind Center were established in the future which, indeed, had eventually materialized. He hired Williams within weeks of his own appointment. Bledsoe provided Williams and his pioneering staff with an environment in which they could experiment and prove or disprove their blind rehabilitation theories and validate their hypotheses. This gave Russell Williams, who could have succeeded in whatever career he had chosen, an excellent opportunity and magnificent challenge to prove his intrinsic worth in modern blind rehabilitation. Over 5,000 blinded veterans have since received their rehabilitation at the Central Blind Rehabilitation Center. Warren was the Coordinator of Blinded Veterans Affairs between September, 1947 and September, 1948. He was re-appointed as part-time consultant from 1948 until 1952. In 1952, Bledsoe was hired for the position of Chief of Blind Rehabilitation Services in Central Office. In 1958, Bledsoe made a lateral move from the VA to a civilian agency, HEW, as a special consultant on blindness where the concern for the physically handicapped was truly genuine. Mary Switzer at HEW had been keenly observing the progress in O & M at Hines and was highly impressed by it. As a special consultant, Bledsoe was instrumental in influencing Switzer to initiate university training programs in Orientation & Mobility and to disseminate these techniques across the country through research and demonstration projects. The two most notable pilot programs were initiated in California by former Hines orientor staff members, Larry Blaha and Pete Wurzburger.

Before Bledsoe retired from governmental service in 1976, he joined the MSB Board of Directors as Secretary and as a member of the Development & Research Committee. He became an Emeritus member of the Board in December, 1993.

Warren sacrificed his writing career as a potential novelist in favor of that as a historian. He recorded the early activities in the development of the Hines Blind Center. His writings and collection of pertinent correspondence and other written accounts became his corner stone contributions to the Orientation & Mobility archives.

A "C. Warren Bledsoe Publications Award" was established in his honor by A.E.R. to single out those who had made remarkable literary contributions to O & M.

In the meantime, his personal effort did not go unnoticed. In recognition of his contributions, Warren was the recipient of the Alfred Allen Award (1977) and the Lawrence E. Blaha Memorial Award (1984) for the tremendous influence he exerted on a national and international scale through his outstanding leadership and service in the field of rehabilitation of the blind, Bledsoe received the Ambrose M. Shotwell Award (1990). On October 13, 1995, Warren received the A.P.H. Wings of Freedom Award.

MSB PRESIDENT RECEIVES THE COSB AWARD

Louis M. Tutt, President of the Maryland School for the Blind, a visionary in the rehabilitation of blind and visually impaired children, was the recipient of the "William

(L to R) MSB President Louis M. Tutt receives the William H. English Leadership Award from COSB President Dr. Michael J. Bina, Superintendent, Indiana School for the Blind

H. English Leadership Award". It was presented by the President of the Council of School for the Blind (COSB), Dr. Michael Bina, Superintendent, Indiana School for the Blind.

This momentous event took place in October, 1995, at the annual conclave of professionals from the Council which represents 53 schools for the blind nationwide and the American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville, Kentucky. The William H. English Leadership Award recognizes those who have made significant and outstanding contributions in leadership and service to the field of visual impairment and unselfishly aided students who are blind and visually impaired. Louis M. Tutt is the fifth recipient of this prestigious national award.

In a letter nominating President Tutt for the award, Herbert Miller, President of St. Joseph School for the Blind in New Jersey, said, "Lou is someone, I and all of us should be proud of and I consider Lou my role model". Mr. Tutt is, indeed, a role model that personifies superlative understanding in the field of blindness and, particularly, in the rehabilitation of severely disabled blind and visually impaired children. He recognizes intrinsic value of young blind and visually impaired children, adjusting, playing, studying and working together in harmony.

When Dr. Rick Welsh resigned to accept a position at the Greater Pittsburgh Guild for the Blind, he made a superb choice in selecting Mr. Tutt to replace him five years ago. Mr. Tutt came with impressive administrative credentials besides vast experience in the field of blindness. He was the Superintendent of the Missouri School for the Blind for nine years. Prior to that, he was a teacher and an administrator of the Michigan School for the Blind. Mr. Tutt also holds two Masters Degrees from Michigan State University. He is a nationally acclaimed expert in the field of visual impairment. He is currently on the Board of Trustees at Goucher College and a former member of the Board of Leadership , Baltimore County. Mr. Tutt is the immediate Past President of COSB; current Treasurer of the Eastern Athletic Association for the Blind and a former Board Member with the Association of the Education and Rehabilitation for the Blind and the Council for Exceptional Children-Division of the Visually Handicapped. Mr. Tutt was instrumental in fostering the growth of that organization which continues to serve athletes for schools for the blind in six States.

The Maryland School for the Blind is a privately endowed State-aided institution, established in 1853, to provide educational opportunities for children who are blind or visually impaired. The Maryland School for the Blind has undergone a number of changes, both physically and in the services it provides. The school was moved from the city proper to the outskirts, to a 95 acre campus, immediately following the first decade of the 20th Century. MSB is accredited by the National Accreditation Council. The school provides outreach services in every county in Maryland. In the

recent years, the school has expanded its programs for deaf/blind students and profoundly disabled students. Mr. Tutt is an expert in this highly specialized area of education. Under his innovative direction, significant expansions and improvement were made to maintain excellence in the field of blind education.

This award presented to Mr. Louis M. Tutt, by his peers on behalf of all schools for the blind across the country ostensibly demonstrates that the tradition continues under his leadership. What a remarkable achievement and what an impressive compliment for Maryland! (Ironically, Mr. Tutt's new residence at the Maryland School for the Blind, was the house in which C. Warren Bledsoe was born 83 years ago. Providentially, the two men, one who was born and reared in the house and the other who inherited the same house for the duration of his tenure as President, received their respective recognition and awards on the same weekend in Louisville, Kentucky.)

The CBRC staff and the Torch, congratulate these two exceptional men who selflessly committed themselves to educate and rehabilitate the blind.

KEEPERS OF THE FLAME

The military service organizations are our keepers of the flame. The VAMCs in Chicago are fortunate that the VSOs are actively involved in alleviating some of the financial burdens and providing voluntary activities.

As long as there is a need for a military, the veterans' programs are essential.

Our stalwarts are the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), Veterans of Foreign War (VFW), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), American Legion, Amvets, Hospitalized War Veterans, Inc., Blinded Veterans Association and countless others. They have all been in our corner throughout the year, providing financial support to counter balance the government budgetary cutbacks. They all ease the burden for our VAMCs.

The Department of Illinois Military Order of the Purple Heart has been extremely supportive of the Central Blind Rehabilitation Center and its consumers. As a matter of fact, it has cost the MOPH $4,221.00 to keep six issues of the Torch aglow. In the past fiscal year, the MOPH's expenditures to the VAMC, retired Veterans Homes in Illinois and indigent veterans in and out of VA Hospitals, have totalled $249,981.00. In the years past, the expenditures have far exceeded this amount on more than several occasions. They also conduct social activities, bingos and off station activities for the blinded veterans two to three times a month. In September, the MOPH held a picnic for the Center's consumers.

PORKERS AT THE VFW PIG ROAST "FEEL THE HEAT"

Every August, the Ladies Auxiliary of DuPage Memorial VFW Post 2164, hosts the annual "Barbara Klemm Pig Roast" in Wheaton, Illinois. This was the 18th Pig Roast function since its inception. It is a popular event which draws a great gathering of VFW members, their family and friends, current and past CBRC staff and the blinded veterans attending the blind rehabilitation program. Linda Johnson is the Auxiliary Hospital Chairman. At the crack of dawn, the Johnson boys, Phillip and Dave, skillfully prepared the porkers to roast in the home-made portable roaster. Entertainments for the youngsters, were organized by the adults while the rest of the adults socialized. By high noon, the aroma indicated that the porkers were ready to be carved and served. By that time the tables were decked bountifully with delicious food of all sorts. The line had begun to form at the serving table; no one had to be told. Socializing continued after everyone was replete with delicious food. Musical entertainment was provided for dancing which went on into the evening hours.

The success of this pig roast is a testimony to the memory of Barbara Klemm as founder of this annual event. It was truly a rewarding experience for those assisting and donating their time. We look forward to seeing you next year.

The fourth Wednesday of each month, the Batavia VFW Post 1197 Auxiliary sponsors an outing at the post for the blinded veterans in training at CBRC.

Aux. Pres. Marie Lorenz overseeing the bingo game.

Jeanne Anderson assisting the veterans in the bingo game.

Anywhere from 20 to 24 veterans attend. There are bingo games and the opportunity to socialize outside of the hospital environment. The Batavia Auxiliary has established the reputation of being generous in serving king sized hamburgers and cheese burgers with french fries and refreshments. Plus second serving for those who wish for more. The veterans all look forward to the outing at Batavia.

Hospitalized War Veterans, Inc., has a only handful of members that make Pat Sullivan's organization function effectively. The organizations primary concern is to entertain the blinded veterans with outings on weekends and holidays. The Golden K members, Amvets Post 192 and the Oak Lawn Park District all join to help Pat Sullivan with his humanitarian efforts.

Christmas party at Home Run Inn with Santa and big helper, Melody Angelini.

Vice Pres. Noel Grening passing out doughnuts before a tour to the Brookfield Zoo.

Chief Whitehead of CBRC taking command after a symphony concert

VETS ENJOY THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS 4TH ANNUAL THANKSGIVING DINNER

The Holy Family Assembly #2255, a Fourth Degree organization of the Knights of Columbus, hosted its 4th annual dinner on Sunday, November 19th for Hines VA Hospital blind patients. Holy Family Assembly prides itself on the many Honor Guards that the fourth degree Knights participate in, with all their regalia. Their Motto is "God and Country" and they enjoy sponsoring this yearly event for our vets.

This festive occasion began at 2:00 P.M. at the Palos Country Club, 13100 Southwest Highway, Palos Park, Illinois. Many of the vets. are first time patients at Hines Hospital. They are away from their homes, some from out of state, undergoing rehabilitation training at the Central Blind Rehabilitation Center, Hines, Illinois.

Pleased to accept an invitation to Sunday dinner, these blinded veteran gentlemen were greeted upon their arrival by Officers of Holy Family Assembly and their fellow members. Some of the hosting men attending were Captain Mike Brennan, Purser Bob Murphy, Jerry Marmichevitz,and District Deputy Martin McCue who led the grace before the meal. Also attending was Pat Sullivan, an Assembly member and Oak Lawn park commissioner, who was assisted by members of his Hospitalized War Veterans, Inc. The volunteers enjoyed mingling and assisting the honored guests throughout the afternoon.

It was special surprise for the Assembly members when they found out that one of the blinded veterans was also a Knights of Columbus member from another state. His name was Robert Wittig from Bishop Hagen Council #3126 in Bedford, Ohio.

Entertainment was provided by the Oak Lawn Carolers performing a thirty minute program of a cappella. A single word, superb, defines their beautiful Christmas presentation. Another word, delighted, would accurately describe the audience response.

A traditional turkey dinner with all the trimmings was prepared and served by the chefs and staff of Palos Country Club. This wonderful repast was enjoyed after a prayer for the Lord's blessing. Following the dinner and entertainment the honorary Mayor of CBRC, a resident patient, expressed gratitude on behalf of the 13 veterans who attended for a most enjoyable afternoon.

CONGRATULATIONS REVEREND SANCHEZ!

We are profoundly privileged and most happy and pleased to share this wonderful news with our readers. Neftali Sanchez, a blinded veteran of the Korean war, was engaged to Cathee Cotton on November 10, 1995. (Ms. Cotton is Dr. George Stocking's step-daughter.)

Reverend Sanchez, popularly known as Tali, is the Chaplain of the national Blinded Veterans Association and has been for the past 16 years. He graduated from the Western Apostolic College in Stockton, California and was ordained in 1974. When he completed his rehabilitation training at Hines in 1955, he studied at Pepperdine College, now university, and earned a degree in Psychology. (He was at CBRC between April, 1954 and March, 1955. Then, he returned to Hines for more plastic surgery between June and August, 1956.) He is an extraordinary veteran who not only had to overcome blindness but the loss of both hands. For those of us who were only blinded could not complain about our sightlessness in the presence of a remarkable veteran who had a greater obstacle to conquer and conquer them he did. He encouraged and inspired everyone who sought his counsel and became a model

Cathee Cotton & Reverend Neftali Sanchez

who blinded veterans emulated. He was good for the rehabilitation program and became an unofficial spokesman for the BVA.

Reverend Sanchez and Miss Cotton are looking forward to August 3, 1996, the day on which they will exchange their marriage vows. Congratulations and best wishes.

"OVER THE HILL GANG" NEWS **By Walter G. Olenek**

The "Over the Hill Gang" expresses their warmest wishes to you and yours this Holiday Season.

The "Over the Hill Gang", has been active as usual. We are all "ma-ku-le" (Senior Citizens), but old age infirmities can't keep us down. Extra Ben Gay lotion on our joints and off we go. Now that winter like weather has set in early, we haven't been golfing much unless one or two of us migrated with the birds to do some golfing in Florida or South Carolina. Those of us who braved the severe deep freeze, continued to meet at Horans on Tuesday for luncheon, where the elite meet to eat.

Late Fall, Pete Lazanich and wife, Pat, flew to Reno, Nevada and visited with their friends. They rented a car and toured the coastline of California from San Francisco to San Diego, back to Reno and returned home by airline.

Charlie Mitchell and wife, Reva, overcame their ailments, heart surgery and broken ankle, respectively, visited their daughter, Toni, in Charlotte, North Carolina for a week vacation. The Mitchells then flew to Las Vegas to try their luck at the poker table and visited with one of the resident "Over the Hiller", Tom Minoia and wife, Ann.

Ray and wife, Gala Brooks, went to Florida for a three week visit with Ray's sister, his daughter and renewed an old acquaintance with one of his buddies, Smokey Peterson. Whenever possible, the Brooks filled some cavities at the country club and lounged around for the rest of their time.

On December 19th, the Brooks hosted and celebrated their annual Christmas invitational with food, chatter and refreshments.

On December 12th, the "Old Timers'" Corned Beef and Cabbage dinner was held. Those in attendance were, Rich Bugielski, Pete Lazanich, "BJ" Bjork, Bill Charleston, Mel Meyer, Walter Olenek and his two nephews, Jim and Steve.

"BJ" Bjork, who recently celebrated his 82nd birthday, heard from one of his former patients dating back to 1952, Mike Bernay and also from another patient of that same year, Paul Johnson. What a surprise! "BJ" and wife, Lil, keep their monthly obligation, assisting the Senior Friendship Club with its luncheon every first Tuesday each month.

Bill Charleston and Mel Meyer visited with their former neighbors in northern Door County, Wisconsin, before the big snow flew. Upon their return, they attended the "Old Timers'" luncheon at Palmer's Place in LaGrange, Illinois.

Since winter encroached early this year, terminating golfing activities, the "Over the Hillers" have been testing out watering holes in neighboring suburbs, to investigate if the food and refreshments qualitatively compared to that at their old "hangout" at Horans.

In October, Rich and Colletta Bugielski spent a whole month near St. Pete, Florida, golfing and whetting their appetite for a Thanksgiving dinner at their son, Rich's family in River Falls, Wisconsin. Rich, Jr. is a Social Worker at a VAMC in Minnesota.

Walter Olenek and Vince Oddo and family followed the Chicago Bears very closely. The 1995 season is a classic example why the Chicago Bears should not depend on the other teams for its chances. The Bears did exactly as the professionals said that they should do which was to win the last two games. Unfortunately, the team they were depending upon to win failed to do so which eliminated the Bears from being in the play offs. What an exciting but frustrating season. Better luck in the 1996 season.

Al Wietecha, a golf shop proprietor, a friend of the "Over the Hillers", underwent angioplasty procedure on November 28th and is recovering very well.

Mr. Storti passed away in November. He is Joe Mysza's son-in-law.

Dolores Kamowski a dearest friend of Mel Meyer, died on December 16th, resulting from a complication from heart surgery.

The "Over the Hillers" wish Al Wietecha speedy recovery. Condolences are extended to the Kamowskis and the Myszas.

FONDEST FAREWELL TO ANASTASIA J. "NANCY" WHITE

Anastasia J. "Nancy" White born on March 1, 1928 and at eternal peace on November 26, 1995.

Nancy was born and reared in Chicago, Illinois at 334 Trumbull Avenue and was a member of Our Lady of Sorrows parish. Nancy attended and graduated from Help of Christians grade school and Lucy Flower High School and had a Master of Arts in home economics. On October 25, 1947, she and Richard I. "Dick" White were married in Our Lady of Sorrows church. Out of this wedlock six children were born, Thomas Roger, Lynn Christine, David Alan, Julia Anna, Theresa Lynn and William Shawn. (The Whites were saddened by the loss of Lynn Christine in October, 1953.) During the early years of marriage, the Whites lived on North Kedzie Park Way where the first three children were born. On November 14, 1956, the Whites moved to Roselle, Illinois. It was there the two last offspring, Theresa and William were born and all five children were educated and reared.

Nancy actively participated in Roselle community activities, fulfilling her obligations for the educational and community social functions from which her children were benefitting. She served on the school district P.T.O., as special tutor in reading and remedial reading, supervising elementary school lunch periods and playground activities, volunteer driver for the Boys Scout and Girls Scouts, etc.

Anastasia J. "Nancy" White

In December, 1967, just at the time when Dick was rapidly losing his eye sight, Nancy suffered a medical problem caused by a rheumatic heart condition. Then, in July, 1976, she was afflicted by a heart condition that required mitral valve replacement. In spite of her health problems, she was not deterred from serving as Officer of the Court for 8 years as an election judge, logging 10,000 volunteer hours for Department of Veterans Affairs, Board of Director of the Illinois BVA, a VISTA volunteer, a member and chaplain of the Women Auxiliary Post 2164. When her daughters were attending ElmHurst College, she served as Mother of Zeta Iota Chapter of Sigma Kappa sorority.

For her dedicated support of Dick's work in the Illinois BVA, Nancy received the Torch Award. When Dick lost his sight, she remained loyal as a wife, confidant, a compassionate companion and chauffeur. She had been his eyes so he could see with his mind's eyes for the last twenty five years.

In August, 1990, Nancy suffered a condition that caused her to be confined to a wheelchair. Nevertheless, she overcame being mute. Although she could not overcome the paralysis of her right side, she thanked God daily for what she had and not for what she had lost. Even in the most difficult of time she never complained. In spite of her tragic circumstances, she continued to love and support her children, now all married who gave her 12 grandchildren. No kinder, loving and generous wife, mother and grandmother could ever replace her. Nancy will be missed dearly by her family and friends.

REQUIEM MASS FOR NANCY

A funeral Mass for Nancy White was held at Saint Domitilla Church, Hillside, Illinois, on Wednesday, November 29, 1995. Within this strikingly modern, circular structure, the Reverend Father Lawrence Jenco celebrated the Mass and delivered a very personalized homily for her family and friends.

He remarked that Nancy began her spiritual life with her baptism at this very same parish shortly after her birth. And although there was sadness at her passing, there should also be a celebration of her entry into the gates of heaven.

Father Jenco spoke further of Nancy's fine qualities which endeared her to everyone; qualities that established her as an extraordinary human being and those that served her so well as a wife, mother, loving sister, aunt, grandmother and friend to many. Those who were present and came to share this loss of a dearly loved person, were comforted by the words of the priest and the resonant singing of the hymns that accompanied the Mass.

A grave side service was held at the Queen of Heaven Cemetery, Hillside, Illinois, the site of her final place of rest.

CONDOLENCES

Deepest sympathy is conveyed to the late Anastasia Nancy White's family.

Condolences are conveyed to Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Garofalo on the loss of Gerald Recchio, 57, who succumbed to heart attack.

THE TORCH GLOWS

by Gala Brooks, O & M Supervisor

HELLO AND GOODBYE

My goodness, the changes we have seen! When you are good, you are good...as the saying goes! And when you are good, people want you and you get promoted etc., etc. So we have many changes to report at the Blind Rehabilitation Center.

CBRC REVOLVING DOOR OF OPPORTUNITY

Let's begin in the manual skills department. Tim Korwin moved into the low vision department to expand his professional horizons, Chuck Brancheau received a promotion by being selected as the Living Skills Department supervisor, Kathy Wales moves to warmer weather by joining the manual skills staff in Augusta, Georgia at the newest blind rehabilitation center and longtime BRC staff member, Marybeth Shackett-Suteu has been selected for the newly established Blind Rehabilitation Out-Patient Specialist (BROS) for VAMC Tampa, Florida. But Jerry has let no grass grow under his feet! He welcomes new staff members; Laura Partipilo, Werner Dieter and Karen Hall. Laura and Karen are rehabilitation teachers from Western Michigan University who completed internships at Palo Alto and Hines respectively. Both are vivacious and talented professionals who are welcomed additions to the staff. Dieter Werner is a retired industrial arts teacher who taught in the Chicagoland area for the past 26 years prior to retirement.

WHAT'S KNEW IN THE O & M AND LOW VISION DEPARTMENT

Looking onto mobility, Bill Lange is the second Hines BRC staff member to receive a promotion to the BROS position in VAMC Baltimore. He has been replaced by Jim Burns, a WMU grad who interned at the SEBRC in Birmingham, AL. And onto low vision, Barbara Fleming-Smith and Amy Erickson join Steve and Tim in the Low Vision department. Barbara is an O&M Specialist from WMU and Amy a Rehabilitation Teacher from Northern Illinois University.

All of the departing staff members will be missed but we cheer them on in their new endeavors. In particular, Marybeth and Bill become pioneers in a newly developed outpatient program. Their charge is to assess veterans in the field and to provide services so that the waiting list for veterans entering into the blind rehabilitation programs will be shortened. Currently, Marybeth and Bill are participating in training programs. They should be in place at their new facilities by April 1996. The Hines BRC will also receive the benefits of BROS services from the Indianapolis VAMC through Bob Simpson (O&M'er from the SEBRC) and Cleveland VAMC BROS person (not selected as yet). This is a very exciting new development in the field of blind rehabilitation and we are all very excited about the possibilities!

STORK REVISITED THE BRANCHEAUS, TO ADD AS A BONUS TO CHUCK'S NEW POSITION

Chuck Brancheau has been doubly blessed! Not only was he selected as the LS Supervisor on 9/3/95 but on 9/29/95, he and wife Cindy welcomed their third son Daniel Adam a 7 lb. 8 oz 21 1/2 " bouncing playmate for Michael and Matthew! Congrats to the Brancheaus.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS 1995

JANUARY

18 Rita Hutton (Regional Consultant)
19 Dr. Richard E. Hoover (Father of the Light Weight Long Cane) Deceased
20 Karen Dahlheimer (O & M)
31 Zola Rice (Supervisor LS & Asst. Chief) Deceased
31 Ann Suchie (Sixth Executive Secretary)

FEBRUARY

2 Michelle Robinson (O & M)
2 Tim Korwin (MS)
6 Marshall E. Pierce (CATS)
6 Roberta Messer (Nursing)
19 Russell C. Williams (First Chief of CBRC)
26 J. J. Whitehead (Fourth Chief of CBRC)
28 Alford DeWitt Corbett (Charter O & M'er) Deceased
28 Jack Henschen (O & M Pioneer)

MARCH

6 Loyal E. Apple (2nd CBRC Chief &1st WBRC Chief)
18 Richard Brown (Retired Supervisor, LS)
21 Beatriz Klich (Psychologist)
23 James Lassen (Early O & M, now working in California)
30 Dennise VanKoevering (O & M)
30 Edward Polfus (Pioneer O & M'er) Deceased

APRIL

12 Don DeRubis (Supervisor, O & M)
17 Kathy Smith (LS)
20 Cheryl Podgorski (LS)
20 Walter G. Olenek (Retired pioneer O & M'er)
21 John Malamazian (Third CBRC Chief) Deceased
22 Debbie Huml (Nursing)
26 George Haley (LS)

MAY

7 Alvin Stafford Chiles (Pioneer Shop Supervisor) Deceased
8 Martha Psaromatis, R.N. (Nursing)
15 Barbara Fleming Smith (LV)
16 O. S. Paly, M.D. (Physician)
17 Chris DiPompeo (LPN)
23 William McCloskey (O & M)
23 Patrick Zienstra (O & M)
26 John Thompson (Retired Supervisor, MS & Assistant Chief) Deceased

JUNE

1 Kathy Gedritis (Nursing)
2 Jim Burns (O & M)
6 James Reece (Assistant Chief)
9 Leland Puttcamp (Retired MS)
10 Lawrence E. Blaha (Pioneer O & M'er) deceased and memorialized by A.E.R. O & M Division IX
27 Norman Roche (Pioneer O & M'er, Transferred to CT) Deceased

JULY

2 Bob Gockman (Assistant Chief) Retired
10 Lee Farmer (Retired Pioneer O & M'er Research Specialist)
11 Karin Hall (MS)
15 C. Warren Bledsoe (Godfather of V.A. Blind Rehabilitation)
16 Lloyd C. Widerberg (Assistant Professor at WMU) Deceased
17 Eddie P. Mees (Charter O & M'er) Deceased
18 Marilyn Williams (Secretary)
19 Heather Dalgleish (O & M)
21 Donald Blasch (Retired Psychologist, Chief at CBRC and Director of Blind Rehab. Department at WMU) Deceased
22 Randy Simons (LS)
31 Marybeth Harrison (LS)

AUGUST

2 Dan Smith (TT, O & M)
2 Berdell Pete Wurzburger (Retired Pioneer O & M'er)
4 Clovis Semmes (Early O & M'er, now retired)
5 Kathern F. Gruber (Pioneer V.A. Consultant)
14 Emery Whitlow (LS)
17 Franklin D. Wood (Retired Pioneer O & M-er)
18 Richard C. Bugielski (Retired Pioneer O & M Supervisor)
22 Chuck Brancheau (Supervisor LS)
25 Raymond Brooks (Retired Pioneer O & M'er)
25 Darlene Voustros (Secretary)

29 Florence R. Carino (Retired LS)
30 Scott Smith (O & M)

SEPTEMBER

7 Kim Maruna (O & M)
7 Dorothy Koch (Third Executive Secretary) Retired
15 Edward "Bud" Thuis (Charter O & M-er) Deceased
17 Gary Schultz (O & M)
19 Harvey Lauer (TT-RM)
24 Duane Christianson (CATS)
26 Hildur Landry (Retired MOPH Pioneer Volunteer -- Extraordinaire)
29 Valerie Allen (Nursing)

OCTOBER

3 Genevieve Miller (Retired First Assistant Chief)
7 Barbara Cislo (CATS)
9 Debbie Dean (CATS)
11 Zenie Bongcas (Nursing)
13 Dr. Joan Stelmack (Staff Optometry)
21 Elizabeth Gallichio (Social Work)
25 Jerry Schutter (Supervisor MS)

NOVEMBER

7 Sylvia Quandt (Nursing)
11 Steve Rinne (VS)
11 Jim A. Enzinna (Retired Supervisor Pioneer O & M'er)
22 Rich Russo (Pioneer O & M'er, transferred to O & M Rehab. Center for the Blind in California, Assistant Administrator) Retired
22 George Abbott (CATS)
29 Dani Beagle (MS)
30 Dieter Werner (MS)

DECEMBER

2 Evert A. Bjork (Retired Pioneer O & M'er)
8 Eric Strong (O & M)
16 Laura Partipilo (MS)
18 Linda Jackson (Ward Secretary)
29 Gala Brooks (Supervisor O & M)
30 Stan Suterko (Retired Charter First O & M Supervisor & Professor Emeritus at WMU)
31 Leonard Mowinski (Supervisor, CATS)

FORMER STAFF BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS 1995

JANUARY

15 Margareta Felix (Secretary)

FEBRUARY

9 Barbara Hunt (VIST Coordinator)
11 Dan Measel (O & M)
22 Marilyn Kessler (Nursing)

MARCH

2 Paul LaRose (Supervisor, VS)
6 Kim Richardson (O & M)
10 Mary Suteu (BROS)
21 Danell Kent (Fifth Executive Secretary)

MAY

4 Jim Troglio (LS)
31 William Lange (BROS)

JULY

18 Erin Searl (VS)
25 Melinda Easley (MS)

AUGUST

4 Betty White (Fourth Executive Secretary) Retired
12 Terry Thorne (O & M) (VIST Coordinator)
27 Emma DeYampert (LS) Retired

SEPTEMBER

20 Bill O'Neil (MS) Retired
28 Kathy Wales (MS)

OCTOBER

3 Mike Marincic (MS)
13 Ceil Waszak (Medical Secretary) Retired

DECEMBER

8 Mary Milne (O & M)
27 Luvenia Ellis (Nursing)

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A belated Seasons greeting and great New Year to one and all!

ATTENTION: The Torch publication is free for the asking. Should there be any change of address, or wish not to be on the mailing list, please notify us. Our address is:

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